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selected poems of Emily Dickinson

with an introduction by CONRAD AIKEN

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A precious, mouldering pleasure 'tis.
To meet an antique book,
In just the dress his century wore;
A privilege, I think,

٦,

His venerable hand to take, And warming in our own, A passage back, or two, to make To times when he was young.

His quaint opinions to inspect, His knowledge to unfold On what concerns our mutual mind, The literature of old;

What interested scholars most, What competitions ran When Plato was a certainty, And Sophocles a man;

When Sappho was a living girl, And Beatrice wore The gown that Dante deified. Facts, centuries before,

He traverses familiar,
As one should come to town
And tell you all your dreams were true:
He lived where dreams were born.

His presence is enchantment, You beg him not to go; Old volumes shake their vellum heads And tantalize, just so.

11

Much madness is divinest sense
To a discerning eye;
Much sense the starkest madness.

Tis the majority
In this, as all, prevails.
Assent, and you are sane;
Demur,—you're straightway dangerous,
And handled with a chain.

12

I ASKED no other thing,
No other was denied.
I offered Being for it;
The mighty merchant smiled.

Brazil? He twirled a button.
Without a glance my way:
"But, madam, is there nothing else
That we can show to-day?"

13

THE soul selects her own society, Then shuts the door; On her divine majority Obtrude no more. Unmoved, she notes the chariot's pausing At her low gate;
Unmoved, an emperor is kneeling
Upon her mat.

I've known her from an ample nation Choose one; Then close the valves of her attention Like stone.

14

Some things that fly there be,—Birds, hours, the bumble-bee:
Of these no elegy.

Some things that stay there be,—Grief, hills, eternity:
Nor this behooveth me.

There are, that resting, rise. Can I expound the skies? How still the riddle lies!

15

J KNOW some lonely houses off the road A robber'd like the look of,—
Wooden barred,
And windows hanging low,
Inviting to
A portico,

Where two could creep: One hand the tools, The other peep To make sure all's asleep. Old-fashioned eyes, Not easy to surprise!

How orderly the kitchen'd look by night, With just a clock,—
But they could gag the tick,
And mice won't bark;
And so the walls don't tell,
None will.

A pair of spectacles ajar just stir—An almanac's aware.
Was it the mat winked,
Or a nervous star?
The moon slides down the stair
To see who's there.

There's plunder,—where?
Tankard, or spoon,
Earring, or stone,
A watch, some ancient brooch
To match the grandmamma,
Staid sleeping there.

Day rattles, too, Stealth's slow; The sun has got as far As the third sycamore. Within the fields lie low, Too late for striving fingers That passed, an hour ago.

A WOUNDED deer leaps highest, I've heard the hunter tell; 'Tis but the ecstasy of death,

And then the brake is still.

The smitten rock that gushes, The trampled steel that springs: A cheek is always redder Just where the hectic stings!

Mirth is the mail of anguish, In which it caution arm, Lest anybody spy the blood And "You're hurt" exclaim!

THE heart asks pleasure first, And then, excuse from pain; And then, those little anodynes That deaden suffering;

And then, to go to sleep; And then, if it should be The will of its Inquisitor, The liberty to die. Ring, for the scant salvation!
Toll, for the bonnie souls,—
Neighbor and friend and bridegroom,
Spinning upon the shoals!

How they will tell the shipwreck When winter shakes the door, Till the children ask, "But the forty? Did they come back no more?"

Then a silence suffuses the story, And a softness the teller's eye; And the children no further question, And only the waves reply.

JF I can stop one heart from breaking, I shall not live in vain;
If I can ease one life the aching,
Or cool one pain,
Or help one fainting robin
Unto his nest again,
I shall not live in vain.

WITHIN my reach!
I could have touched!
I might have chanced that way!
Soft sauntered through the village,
Sauntered as soft away!
So unsuspected violets

7

Screams chanticleer, "Who's there?"

And echoes, trains away,
Sneer—"Where?"
While the old couple, just astir,
Think that the sunrise left the door ajar!

16

To fight aloud is very brave, But gallanter, I know, Who charge within the bosom, The cavalry of woe.

Who win, and nations do not see, Who fall, and none observe, Whose dying eyes no country Regards with patriot love.

We trust, in plumed procession, For such the angels go, Rank after rank, with even feet And uniforms of snow.

17

When night is almost done, And sunrise grows so near That we can touch the spaces, It's time to smooth the hair

[11]

And get the dimples ready, And wonder we could care For that old faded midnight That frightened but an hour.

18

READ, sweet, how others strove,
Till we are stouter;
What they renounced,
Till we are less afraid;
How many times they bore
The faithful witness,
Till we are helped,
As if a kingdom cared!

Read then of faith
That shone above the fagot;
Clear strains of hymn
The river could not drown;
Brave names of men
And celestial women,
Passed out of record
Into renown!

19

PAIN has an element of blank; It cannot recollect When it began, or if there were A day when it was not.

[12]

It has no future but itself, Its infinite realms contain Its past, enlightened to perceive New periods of pain.

20

TASTE a liquor never brewed, V From tankards scooped in pearl; Not all the vats upon the Rhine Yield such an alcohol!

Inebriate of air am I, And debauchee of dew, Reeling, through endless summer days, From inns of molten blue.

When landlords turn the drunken bee Out of the foxglove's door, When butterflies renounce their drams, I shall but drink the more!

Till seraphs swing their snowy hats, And saints to windows run, To see the little tippler Leaning against the sun!

21

HE ate and drank the precious words, His spirit grew robust; He knew no more that he was poor, Nor that his frame was dust. He danced along the dingy days, And this bequest of wings Was but a book. What liberty A loosened spirit brings!

22

J had no time to hate, because The grave would hinder me, And life was not so ample I Could finish enmity.

Nor had I time to love; but since Some industry must be, The little toil of love, I thought, Was large enough for me.

23

Twas such a little, little boat That toddled down the bay! Twas such a gallant, gallant sea That beckoned it away!

'Twas such a greedy, greedy wave That licked it from the coast; Nor ever guessed the stately sails My little craft was lost!

24

WHETHER my bark went down at sea, Whether she met with gales,

Whether to isles enchanted She bent her docile sails;

By what mystic mooring She is held to-day,— This is the errand of the eye Out upon the bay.

25

BELSHAZZAR had a letter,— He never had but one; Belshazzar's correspondent Concluded and begun In that immortal copy The conscience of us all Can read without its glasses On revelation's wall.

26

THE brain within its groove
Runs evenly and true;
But let a splinter swerve,
'Twere easier for you
To put the water back
When floods have slit the hills,
And scooped a turnpike for themselves,
And blotted out the mills!

27

I'м nobody! Who are you? Are you nobody, too?

Then there's a pair of us—don't tell! They'd banish us, you know.

How dreary to be somebody! How public, like a frog To tell your name the livelong day To an admiring bog!

28

J BRING an unaccustomed wine V To lips long parching, next to mine, And summon them to drink.

Crackling with fever, they essay; I turn my brimming eyes away, And come next hour to look.

The hands still hug the tardy glass; The lips I would have cooled, alas! Are so superfluous cold,

I would as soon attempt to warm The bosoms where the frost has lain Ages beneath the mould.

Some other thirsty there may be To whom this would have pointed me Had it remained to speak.

And so I always bear the cup If, haply, mine may be the drop Some pilgrim thirst to slake,—

If, haply, any say to me, "Unto the little, unto me," When I at last awake.

29

THE nearest dream recedes, unrealized.

The heaven we chase
Like the June bee
Before the school-boy
Invites the race,
Stoops to an easy clover—

Dips—evades—teases—deploys;
Then to the royal clouds
Lifts his light pinnace
Heedless of the boy
Staring, bewildered, at the mocking sky.

Homesick for steadfast honey, Ah! the bee flies not That brews that rare variety.

30

We play at paste,
Till qualified for pearl,
Then drop the paste,
And deem ourself a fool.
The shapes, though, were similar,
And our new hands
Learned gem-tactics
Practising sands.

[17]

J FOUND the phrase to every thought I ever had, but one; And that defies me,—as a hand Did try to chalk the sun

To races nurtured in the dark;—How would your own begin?
Can blaze be done in cochineal,
Or noon in mazarin?

32 N

HOPE is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune without the words
And never stops at all,

And sweetest in the gale is heard; And sore must be the storm That could abash the little bird That kept so many warm.

I've heard it in the chillest land, And on the strangest sea; Yet, never, in extremity, It asked a crumb of me.

23

DARE you see a soul at the white heat? Then crouch within the door. Red is the fire's common tint; But when the vivid ore

Has sated flame's conditions, Its quivering substance plays Without a color but the light Of unanointed blaze.

Least village boasts its blacksmith, Whose anvil's even din Stands symbol for the finer forge That soundless tugs within,

Refining these impatient ores
With hammer and with blaze,
Until the designated light
Repudiate the forge.

34

Who never lost, are unprepared A coronet to find;
Who never thirsted, flagons
And cooling tamarind.

Who never climbed the weary league— Can such a foot explore The purple territories On Pizarro's shore?

How many legions overcome? The emperor will say.

How many colors taken On Revolution Day?

How many bullets bearest? The royal scar hast thou? Angels, write "Promoted" On this soldier's brow!

35

I CAN wade grief,
Whole pools of it,—
I'm used to that.
But the least push of joy
Breaks up my feet,
And I tip—drunken.
Let no pebble smile,
'Twas the new liquor,—
That was all!

Power is only pain,
Stranded, through discipline,
Till weights will hang.
Give balm to giants,
And they'll wilt, like men.
Give Himmaleh,—
They'll carry him!

36

I NEVER hear the word "escape" Without a quicker blood,

A sudden expectation, A flying attitude.

I never hear of prisons broad By soldiers battered down, But I tug childish at my bars,— Only to fail again!

37

For each ecstatic instant We must an anguish pay In keen and quivering ratio To the ecstasy.

For each beloved hour Sharp pittances of years, Bitter contested farthings And coffers heaped with tears.

38

Through the straight pass of suffering The martyrs even trod,
Their feet upon temptation,
Their faces upon God.

A stately, shriven company; Convulsion playing round, Harmless as streaks of meteor Upon a planet's bound.

[21]

Their faith the everlasting troth; Their expectation fair; The needle to the north degree Wades so, through polar air.

39

J MEANT to have but modest needs, Such as content, and heaven; Within my income these could lie, And life and I keep even.

But since the last included both, It would suffice my prayer But just for one to stipulate, And grace would grant the pair.

And so, upon this wise I prayed,—Great Spirit, give to me
A heaven not so large as yours,
But large enough for me.

A smile suffused Jehovah's face; The cherubim witndrew; Grave saints stole out to look at me, And showed their dimples, too.

I left the place with all my might,— My prayer away I threw; The quiet ages picked it up, And Judgment twinkled, too, That one so honest be extant As take the tale for true That "Whatsoever you shall ask, Itself be given you."

But I, grown shrewder, scan the skies With a suspicious air,—
As children, swindled for the first,
All swindlers be, infer.

40

THE thought beneath so slight a film Is more distinctly seen,—
As laces just reveal the surge,
Or mists the Apennine.

41

THE soul unto itself
Is an imperial friend,—
Or the most agonizing spy
An enemy could send.

Secure against its own,
No treason it can fear;
Itself its sovereign, of itself
The soul should stand in awe.

42

Surgeons must be very careful When they take the knife!

[23]

Underneath their fine incisions Stirs the culprit,—Life!

43

J LIKE to see it lap the miles, And lick the valleys up, And stop to feed itself at tanks; And then, prodigious, step

Around a pile of mountains, And, supercilious, peer In shanties by the sides of roads; And then a quarry pare

To fit its sides, and crawl between, Complaining all the while In horrid, hooting stanza; Then chase itself down hill

And neigh like Boanerges;
Then, punctual as a star,
Stop—docile and omnipotent—
At its own stable door.

44

THE show is not the show, But they that go.
Menagerie to me
My neighbor be.
Fair play—
Both went to see.

[24]

DELIGHT becomes pictorial When viewed through pain,—More fair, because impossible That any gain.

The mountain at a given distance In amber lies; Approached, the amber flits a little,-And that's the skies!

46

A THOUGHT went up my mind to-day That I have had before, But did not finish,—some way back, I could not fix the year,

Nor where it went, nor why it came The second time to me, Nor definitely what it was, Have I the art to say.

But somewhere in my soul, I know I've met the thing before; It just reminded me—'twas all—And came my way no more.

47

Is Heaven a physician?
They say that He can heal;

But medicine posthumous Is unavailable.

Is Heaven an exchequer?
They speak of what we owe;
But that negotiation
I'm not a party to.

48

Though I get home how late, how late! So I get home, 'twill compensate. Better will be the ecstasy
That they have done expecting me,
When, night descending, dumb and dark,
They hear my unexpected knock.
Transporting must the moment be,
Brewed from decades of agony!

To think just how the fire will burn, Just how long-cheated eyes will turn To wonder what myself will say, And what itself will say to me, Beguiles the centuries of way!

49

A poor torn heart, a tattered heart, That sat it down to rest, Nor noticed that the ebbing day Flowed silver to the west, Nor noticed night did soft descend Nor constellation burn, Intent upon the vision Of latitudes unknown.

The angels, happening that way, This dusty heart espied; Tenderly took it up from toil And carried it to God. There,—sandals for the barefoot; There,—gathered from the gales, Do the blue havens by the hand Lead the wandering sails.

50

I should have been too glad, I see,
Too lifted for the scant degree
Of life's penurious round;
My little circuit would have shamed
This new circumference, have blamed
The homelier time behind.

I should have been too saved, I see,
Too rescued; fear too dim to me
That I could spell the prayer
I knew so perfect yesterday,—
That scalding one, "Sabachthani,"
Recited fluent here.

Earth would have been too much, I see, And heaven not enough for me; I should have had the joy Without the fear to justify,— The palm without the Calvary; So, Saviour, crucify.

Defeat whets victory, they say;
The reefs in old Gethsemane
Endear the shore beyond.
'Tis beggars banquets best define;
'Tis thirsting vitalizes wine,—
Faith faints to understand.

51

It tossed and tossed,—
A little brig I knew,—
O'ertook by blast,
It spun and spun,
And groped delirious, for morn.

It slipped and slipped, As one that drunken stepped; Its white foot tripped, Then dropped from sight.

Ah, brig, good-night
To crew and you;
The ocean's heart too smooth, too blue,
To break for you.

52

VICTORY comes late, And is held low to freezing lips Too rapt with frost To take it.

How sweet it would have tasted,
Just a drop!
Was God so economical?
His table's spread too high for us
Unless we dine on tip-toe.
Crumbs fit such little mouths,
Cherries suit robins;
The eagle's golden breakfast
Strangles them.
God keeps his oath to sparrows,
Who of little love
Know how to starve!

53

God gave a loaf to every bird,
But just a crumb to me;
I dare not eat it, though I starve,—
My poignant luxury
To own it, touch it, prove the feat
That made the pellet mine,—
Too happy in my sparrow chance
For ampler coveting.

It might be famine all around,
I could not miss an ear,
Such plenty smiles upon my board,
My garner shows so fair.
I wonder how the rich may feel,—

An Indiaman—an Earl?
I deem that I with but a crumb
Am sovereign of them all.

54

Experiment to me Is every one I meet. If it contain a kernel? The figure of a nut

Presents upon a tree, Equally plausibly; But meat within is requisite, To squirrels and to me.

55

My country need not change her gown, Her triple suit as sweet As when 'twas cut at Lexington, And first pronounced "a fit."

Great Britain disapproves "the stars"; Disparagement discreet,— There's something in their attitude That taunts her bayonet.

56

FAITH is a fine invention For gentlemen who see;

But microscopes are prudent In an emergency!

57

EXCEPT the heaven had come so near, So seemed to choose my door, The distance would not haunt me so; I had not hoped before.

But just to hear the grace depart I never thought to see, Afflicts me with a double loss; 'Tis lost, and lost to me.

58

PORTRAITS are to daily faces As an evening west To a fine, pedantic sunshine In a satin vest.

59

J TOOK my power in my hand And went against the world, 'Twas not so much as David had, But I was twice as bold.

I aimed my pebble, but myself Was all the one that fell. Was it Goliath was too large, Or only I too small?

[31]

A SHADY friend for torrid days Is easier to find Than one of higher temperature For frigid hour of mind.

The vane a little to the east Scares muslin souls away; If broadcloth breasts are firmer Than those of organdy,

Who is to blame? The weaver? Ah! the bewildering thread! The tapestries of paradise So notelessly are made!

61

EACH life converges to some centre Expressed or still;
Exists in every human nature A goal,

Admitted scarcely to itself, it may be, Too fair For credibility's temerity To dare.

Adored with caution, as a brittle heaven, To reach
Were hopeless as the rainbow's raiment
To touch,

[32]

Yet persevered toward, surer for the distance; How high Unto the saints' slow diligence The sky!

Ungained, it may be, by life's low venture, But then, Eternity enables the endeavoring Again.

62

BEFORE I got my eye put out,
I liked as well to see
As other creatures that have eyes,
And know no other way.

But were it told to me, to-day, That I might have the sky For mine, I tell you that my heart Would split, for size of me.

The meadows mine, the mountains mine,—All forests, stintless stars,
As much of noon as I could take
Between my finite eyes.

The motions of the dipping birds, The lightning's jointed road, For mine to look at when I liked,— The news would strike me dead!

So, safer, guess, with just my soul Upon the window-pane

Where other creatures put their eyes, Incautious of the sun.

63

Jalk with prudence to a beggar Of "Potosi" and the mines! Reverently to the hungry Of your viands and your wines!

Cautious, hint to any captive You have passed enfranchised feet! Anecdotes of air in dungeons Have sometimes proved deadly sweet!

HE preached upon "breadth" till it argued him narrow The broad are too broad to define;
And of "truth" until it proclaimed him a liar,—
The truth never flaunted a sign.

Simplicity fled from his counterfeit presence As gold the pyrites would shun. What confusion would cover the innocent Jesus To meet so enabled a man!

65

Good night! which put the candle out?
A jealous zephyr, not a doubt.
Ah! friend, you little knew
How long at that celestial wick

[34]

The angels labored diligent; Extinguished, now, for you!

It might have been the lighthouse spark
Some sailor, rowing in the dark,
Had importuned to see!
It might have been the waning lamp
That lit the drummer from the camp
To purer reveille!

66

When I hoped I feared, Since I hoped I dared; Everywhere alone As a church remain; Spectre cannot harm, Serpent cannot charm; He deposes doom, Who hath suffered him.

67

A DEED knocks first at thought, And then it knocks at will. That is the manufacturing spot, And will at home and well.

It then goes out an act, Or is entombed so still That only to the ear of God Its doom is audible. MINE enemy is growing old,—I have at last revenge.
The palate of the hate departs;
If any would avenge,—

Let him be quick, the viand flits, It is a faded meat.
Anger as soon as fed is dead; 'Tis starving makes it fat.

69

REMORSE is memory awake, Her companies astir,— A presence of departed acts At window and at door.

Its past set down before the soul, And lighted with a match, Perusal to facilitate
Of its condensed despatch.

Remorse is cureless,—the disease Not even God can heal; For 'tis His institution,— 'The complement of hell.

70

THE body grows outside,—
The more convenient way,—

That if the spirit like to hide, Its temple stands alway

Ajar, secure, inviting; It never did betray The soul that asked its shelter In timid honesty.

71

Undue significance a starving man attaches To food
Far off; he sighs, and therefore hopeless,
And therefore good.

Partaken, it relieves indeed, but proves us That spices fly In the receipt. It was the distance Was savory.

72

HEART not so heavy as mine, Wending late home, As it passed my window Whistled itself a tune,—

A careless snatch, a ballad, A ditty of the street; Yet to my irritated ear An anodyne so sweet,

It was as if a bobolink, Sauntering this way, Carolled and mused and carolled, Then bubbled slow away.

It was as if a chirping brook Upon a toilsome way Set bleeding feet to minuets Without the knowing why.

To-morrow, night will come again, Weary, perhaps, and sore. Ah, bugle, by my window, I pray you stroll once more!

73

J MANY times thought peace had come, When peace was far away; As wrecked men deem they sight the land At centre of the sea,

And struggle slacker, but to prove, As hopelessly as I, How many the fictitious shores Before the harbor lie.

74

Unto my books so good to turn Far ends of tired days; It half endears the abstinence, And pain is missed in praise.

As flavors cheer retarded guests With banquetings to be,

So spices stimulate the time Till my small library.

It may be wilderness without, Far feet of failing men, But holiday excludes the night, And it is bells within.

I thank these kinsmen of the shelf; Their countenances bland Enamour in prospective, And satisfy, obtained.

75

This merit hath the worst,— It cannot be again. When Fate hath taunted last And thrown her furthest stone,

The maimed may pause and breathe, And glance securely round. The deer invites no longer Than it eludes the hound.

76

J HAD been hungry all the years; My noon had come, to dine; I, trembling, drew the table near, And touched the curious wine.

Twas this on tables I had seen, When turning, hungry, lone, I looked in windows, for the wealth I could not hope to own.

I did not know the ample bread, 'Twas so unlike the crumb
The birds and I had often shared
In Nature's dining-room.

The plenty hurt me, 'twas so new,— Myself felt ill and odd, As berry of a mountain bush Transplanted to the road.

Nor was I hungry; so I found That hunger was a way Of persons outside windows, The entering takes away.

77

By climbing slow,
By catching at the twigs that grow
Between the bliss and me.

It hung so high, As well the sky Attempt by strategy.

I said I gained it,—
This was all.
Look, how I clutch it,
Lest it fall,

[40]

And I a pauper go; Unfitted by an instant's grace For the contented beggar's face I wore an hour ago.

78

To learn the transport by the pain, As blind men learn the sun; To die of thirst, suspecting That brooks in meadows run;

To stay the homesick, homesick feet Upon a foreign shore Haunted by native lands, the while, And blue, beloved air—

This is the sovereign anguish, This, the signal woe! These are the patient laureates Whose voices, trained below,

Ascend in ceaseless carol, Inaudible, indeed, To us, the duller scholars Of the mysterious bard!

79

J YEARS had been from home, And now, before the door, I dared not open, lest a face I never saw before

[41]

Stare vacant into mine And ask my business there. My business,—just a life I left, Was such still dwelling there?

I fumbled at my nerve, I scanned the windows near; The silence like an ocean rolled, And broke against my ear.

I laughed a wooden laugh That I could fear a door, Who danger and the dead had faced, But never quaked before.

I fitted to the latch My hand, with trembling care, Lest back the awful door should spring, And leave me standing there.

I moved my fingers off
As cautiously as glass,
And held my ears, and like a thief
Fled gasping from the house.

80

PRAYER is the little implement Through which men reach Where presence is denied them. They fling their speech

By means of it in God's ear; If then He hear,

This sums the apparatus Comprised in prayer.

81

I know that he exists Somewhere, in silence. He has hid his rare life From our gross eyes.

'Tis in instant's play,
'Tis a fond ambush,
Just to make bliss
Earn her own surprise!

But should the play Prove piercing earnest, Should the glee glaze In death's stiff stare,

Would not the fun Look too expensive? Would not the jest Have crawled too far?

82

Musicians wrestle everywhere:
All day, among the crowded air,
I hear the silver strife;
And—waking long before the dawn—
Such transport breaks upon the town
I think it that "new life"!

It is not bird, it has no nest;
Nor band, in brass and scarlet dressed,
Nor tambourine, nor man;
It is not hymn from pulpit read,—
The morning stars the treble led
On time's first afternoon!

Some say it is the spheres at play!
Some say that bright majority
Of vanished dames and men!
Some think it service in the place
Where we, with late, celestial face,
Please God, shall ascertain!

83

Just lost when I was saved!
Just felt the world go by!
Just girt me for the onset with eternity,
When breath blew back,
And on the other side
I heard recede the disappointed tide!

Therefore, as one returned, I feel, Odd secrets of the line to tell! Some sailor, skirting foreign shores, Some pale reporter from the awful doors Before the seal!

Next time, to stay! Next time, the things to see By ear unheard, Unscrutinized by eye. Next time, to tarry, While the ages steal,— Slow tramp the centuries, And the cycles wheel.

84

'Is little I could care for pearls
Who own the ample sea;
Or brooches, when the Emperor
With rubies pelteth me;

Or gold, who am the Prince of Mines; Or diamonds, when I see A diadem to fit a dome Continual crowning me.

85

Superiority to fate
Is difficult to learn.
'Tis not conferred by any,
But possible to earn

A pittance at a time,
Until, to her surprise,
The soul with strict economy
Subsists till Paradise.



Hope is a subtle glutton; He feeds upon the fair; And yet, inspected closely, What abstinence is there!

His is the halcyon table
That never seats but one,
And whatsoever is consumed
The same amounts remain.

27

FORBIDDEN fruit a flavor has
That lawful orchards mocks;
How luscious lies the pea within
The pod that Duty locks!

22

Heaven is what I cannot reach!\footnote{\cappa_i} The apple on the tree,
Provided it do hopeless hang,
\tag{That "heaven" is, to me.

The color on the cruising cloud,
The interdicted ground
Behind the hill, the house behind,—
There Paradise is found!

89

A word is dead When it is said, Some say.
I say it just

Begins to live That day.

90

To venerate the simple days
Which lead the seasons by,
Needs but to remember
That from you or me
They may take the trifle
Termed mortality!

To invest existence with a stately air,
Needs but to remember
That the acorn there
Is the egg of forests
For the upper air!

91

Jr's such a little thing to weep,
So short a thing to sigh;
And yet by trades the size of these
We men and women die!

92

Drowning is not so pitiful
As the attempt to rise.
Three times, 'tis said, a sinking man
Comes up to face the skies,
And then declines forever
To that abhorred abode

Where hope and he part company,—
For he is grasped of God.
The Maker's cordial visage,
However good to see,
Is shunned, we must admit it,
Like an adversity.

93

How still the bells in steeples stand, Till, swollen with the sky, They leap upon their silver feet In frantic melody!

94

Could any mortal lip divine
The undeveloped freight
Of a delivered syllable,
'Twould crumble with the weight.

95

My life closed twice before its close;
It yet remains to see
If Immortality unveil
A third event to me,

So huge, so hopeless to conceive, As these that twice befell. Parting is all we know of heaven, And all we need of hell.

[48]

WE never know how high we are Till we are called to rise; And then, if we are true to plan, Our statures touch the skies.

The heroism we recite

Would be a daily thing,

Did not ourselves the cubits warp

For fear to be a king.

97

WHILE I was fearing it, it came,
But came with less of fear,
Because that fearing it so long
Had almost made it dear.
There is a fitting a dismay,
A fitting a despair.
'Tis harder knowing it is due,
Than knowing it is here.
The trying on the utmost,
The morning it is new,
Is terribler than wearing it
A whole existence through.

98

THERE is no frigate like a book
To take us lands away,
Nor any coursers like a page
Of prancing poetry.

This traverse may the poorest take Without oppress of toll; How frugal is the chariot That bears a human soul!

99

Who has not found the heaven below Will fail of it above.
God's residence is next to mine,
His furniture is love.

100

A FACE devoid of love or grace,
A hateful, hard, successful face,
A face with which a stone
Would feel as thoroughly at ease
As were they old acquaintances,—
First time together thrown.

101

J HAD a guinea golden;
I lost it in the sand,
And though the sum was simple,
And pounds were in the land,
Still had it such a value
Unto my frugal eye,
That when I could not find it
I sat me down to sigh.

[50]

I had a crimson robin
Who sang full many a day,
But when the woods were painted
He, too, did fly away.
Time brought me other robins,—
Their ballads were the same,—
Still for my missing troubadour
I kept the "house at hame."

I had a star in heaven;
One Pleiad was its name,
And when I was not heeding
It wandered from the same.
And though the skies are crowded,
And all the night ashine,
I do not care about it,
Since none of them are mine.

My story has a moral:

I have a missing friend,—
Pleiad its name, and robin,
And guinea in the sand,—
And when this mournful ditty,
Accompanied with tear,
Shall meet the eye of traitor
In country far from here,
Grant that repentance solemn
May seize upon his mind,
And he no consolation
Beneath the sun may find.

FROM all the jails the boys and girls Ecstatically leap,—
Beloved, only afternoon
That prison doesn't keep.

They storm the earth and stun the air,
A mob of solid bliss.

Alas! that frowns could lie in wait For such a foe as this!

103

Few get enough,—enough is one,
To that ethereal throng
Have not each one of us the right
To stealthily belong?

104

J FELT a cleavage in my mind
As if my brain had split;
I tried to match it, seam by seam,
But could not make them fit.

The thought behind I strove to join Unto the thought before,
But sequence ravelled out of reach
Like balls upon a floor.

105

THE reticent volcano keeps His never slumbering plan;

[52]

Confided are his projects pink To no precarious man.

If nature will not tell the tale Jehovah told to her, Can human nature not survive Without a listener?

Admonished by her buckled lips Let every babbler be. The only secret people keep Is Immortality.

106

JF recollecting were forgetting,
Then I remember not;
And if forgetting, recollecting,
How near I had forgot!
And if to miss were merry,
And if to mourn were gay,
How very blithe the fingers
That gathered these to-day!

107

THE farthest thunder that I heard
Was nearer than the sky,
And rumbles still, though torrid noons
Have lain their missiles by.
The lightning that preceded it
Struck no one but myself,
But I would not exchange the bolt

For all the rest of life.

Indebtedness to oxygen
The chemist may repay,
But not the obligation
To electricity.

It founds the homes and decks the days,
And every clamor bright
Is but the gleam concomitant
Of that waylaying light.
The thought is quiet as a flake,—
A crash without a sound;
How life's reverberation
Its explanation found!

108

On the bleakness of my lot Bloom I strove to raise. Late, my acre of a rock Yielded grape and maize.

Soil of flint if steadfast tilled Will reward the hand; Seed of palm by Lybian sun Fructified in sand.

109

A poor just opened on a street—
I, lost, was passing by—
An instant's width of warmth disclosed,
And wealth, and company.

The door as sudden shut, and I,
I, lost, was passing by,—
Lost doubly, but by contrast most,
Enlightening misery.

110

Are friends delight or pain? Could bounty but remain Riches were good.

But if they only stay Bolder to fly away, Riches are sad.

111

FATE slew him, but he did not drop; She felled—he did not fall— Impaled him on her fiercest stakes— He neutralized them all.

She stung him, sapped his firm advance, But, when her worst was done, And he, unmoved, regarded her, Acknowledged him a man.

112

MEASURE every grief I meet
 With analytic eyes;
 I wonder if it weighs like mine,
 Or has an easier size.

[55]

I wonder if they bore it long, Or did it just begin? I could not tell the date of mine, It feels so old a pain.

I wonder if it hurts to live,
And if they have to try,
And whether, could they choose between,
They would not rather die.

I wonder if when years have piled— Some thousands—on the cause Of early hurt, if such a lapse Could give them any pause;

Or would they go on aching still Through centuries above, Enlightened to a larger pain By contrast with the love.

The grieved are many, I am told;
The reason deeper lies,—
Death is but one and comes but once,
And only nails the eyes.

There's grief of want, and grief of cold,—
A sort they call "despair";
There's banishment from native eyes,
In sight of native air.

And though I may not guess the kind Correctly, yet to me A piercing comfort it affords In passing Calvary, To note the fashions of the cross, Of those that stand alone, Still fascinated to presume That some are like my own.

113

J наve a king who does not speak
So, wondering, thro' the hours meek
I trudge the day away,—
Half glad when it is night and sleep,
If, haply, thro' a dream to peep
In parlors shut by day.

And if I do, when morning comes,
It is as if a hundred drums
Did round my pillow roll,
And shouts fill all my childish sky,
And bells keep saying "victory"
From steeples in my soul!

And if I don't, the little Bird
Within the Orchard is not heard,
And I omit to pray,
"Father, thy will be done" to-day,
For my will goes the other way,
And it were perjury!

114

It dropped so low in my regard I heard it hit the ground, And go to pieces on the stones At bottom of my mind;

Yet blamed the fate that fractured, less
Than I reviled myself
For entertaining plated wares
Upon my silver shelf.

115

To lose one's faith surpasses
The loss of an estate,
Because estates can be
Replenished,—faith cannot.

Inherited with life,
Belief but once can be;
Annihilate a single clause,
And Being's beggary.

116

Л нар a daily blissI half indifferent viewed,Till sudden I perceived it stir,—It grew as I pursued,

Till when, around a crag,
It wasted from my sight,
Enlarged beyond my utmost scope,
I learned its sweetness right.

Life, and Death, and Giants
Such as these, are still.
Minor apparatus, hopper of the mill,
Beetle at the candle,
Or a fife's small fame,
Maintain by accident
That they proclaim.

118

Our lives are Swiss,—
So still, so cool,
Till, some odd afternoon,
The Alps neglect their curtains,
And we look farther on.

Italy stands the other side,
While, like a guard between,
The solemn Alps,
The siren Alps,
Forever intervene!

119

REMEMBRANCE has a rear and front,—
'Tis something like a house;
It has a garret also
For refuge and the mouse,

Besides, the deepest cellar That ever mason hewed;

[59]

Look to it, by its fathoms
Ourselves be not pursued.

120

To hang our head ostensibly, And subsequent to find That such was not the posture Of our immortal mind,

Affords the sly presumption
That, in so dense a fuzz,
You, too, take cobweb attitudes
Upon a plane of gauze!

121

THE brain is wider than the sky,
For, put them side by side,
The one the other will include
With ease, and you beside.

The brain is deeper than the sea, For, hold them, blue to blue, The one the other will absorb, As sponges, buckets do.

The brain is just the weight of God, For, lift them, pound for pound, And they will differ, if they do, As syllable from sound.

[60]

THE past is such a curious creature,
To look her in the face
A transport may reward us,
Or a disgrace.

Unarmed if any meet her, I charge him, fly! Her rusty ammunition Might yet reply!

123

To help our bleaker parts
Salubrious hours are given,
Which if they do not fit for earth
Drill silently for heaven.

124

What soft, cherubic creatures
These gentlewomen are!
One would as soon assault a plush
Or violate a star.

Such dimity convictions,
A horror so refined
Of freckled human nature,
Of Deity ashamed,—

It's such a common glory, A fisherman's degree!

[61]

Redemption, brittle lady, Be so ashamed of thee.

125

It might be easier
To fail with land in sight,
Than gain my blue peninsula
To perish of delight.

126

7 STEPPED from plank to plank So slow and cautiously; The stars about my head I felt, About my feet the sea.

I knew not but the next
Would be my final inch,—
This gave me that precarious gait
Some call experience.

127

SOFTENED by Time's consummate plush,
How sleek the woe appears
That threatened childhood's citadel
And undermined the years!

Bisected now by bleaker griefs,
We envy the despair
That devastated childhood's realm,
So easy to repair.

[62]

THE day came slow, till five o'clock,
Then sprang before the hills
Like hindered rubies, or the light
A sudden musket spills.

The purple could not keep the east,
The sunrise shook from fold,
Like breadths of topaz, packed a night,
The lady just unrolled.

The happy winds their timbrels took;
The birds, in docile rows,
Arranged themselves around their prince—
(The wind is prince of those).

The orchard sparkled like a Jew,—How mighty 'twas, to stay
A guest in this stupendous place,
The parlor of the day!

THE sun just touched the morning; The morning, happy thing, Supposed that he had come to dwell, And life would be all spring.

She felt herself supremer,—
A raised, ethereal thing;
Henceforth for her what holiday!
Meanwhile, her wheeling king

Trailed slow along the orchards His haughty, spangled hems, Leaving a new necessity,—
The want of diadems!

The morning fluttered, staggered, Felt feebly for her crown,—
Her unanointed forehead
Henceforth her only one.

6

THE robin is the one
That interrupts the morn
With hurried, few, express reports
When March is scarcely on.

The robin is the one
That overflows the noon
With her cherubic quantity,
An April but begun.

The robin is the one That speechless from her nest Submits that home and certainty And sanctity are best.

7

FROM cocoon forth a butterfly
As lady from her door
Emerged—a summer afternoon—
Repairing everywhere,

Without design, that I could trace, Except to stray abroad On miscellaneous enterprise The clovers understood.

Her pretty parasol was seen Contracting in a field Where men made hay, then struggling hard With an opposing cloud,

Where parties, phantom as herself, To Nowhere seemed to go In purposeless circumference, As 'twere a tropic show.

And notwithstanding bee that worked, And flower that zealous blew, This audience of idleness Disdained them, from the sky,

Till sundown crept, a steady tide, And men that made the hay, And afternoon, and butterfly, Extinguished in its sea.

BEFORE you thought of spring, Except as a surmise, You see, God bless his suddenness, A fellow in the skies Of independent hues, A little weather-worn, Inspiriting habiliments Of indigo and brown.

With specimens of song,
As if for you to choose,
Discretion in the interval,
With gay delays he goes
To some superior tree
Without a single leaf,
And shouts for joy to nobody
But his seraphic self!

7

An altered look about the hills; A Tyrian light the village fills; A wider sunrise in the dawn: A deeper twilight on the lawn; A print of a vermilion foot; A purple finger on the slope; A flippant fly upon the pane; A spider at his trade again; An added strut in chanticleer: A flower expected everywhere; An axe shrill singing in the woods; Fern-odors on untravelled roads,-All this, and more I cannot tell, A furtive look you know as well, And Nicodemus' mystery Receives its annual reply.

He'd be too tall, the tallest one Could stretch to look at me.

I could not bear the bees should come, I wished they'd stay away In those dim countries where they go: What word had they for me?

They're here, though; not a creature failed, No blossom stayed away In gentle deference to me, The Queen of Calvary.

Each one salutes me as he goes, And I my childish plumes Lift, in bereaved acknowledgment Of their unthinking drums.

15

A ROUTE of evanescence
With a revolving wheel;
A resonance of emerald,
A rush of cochineal;
And every blossom on the bush
Adjusts its tumbled head,—
The mail from Tunis, probably,
An easy morning's ride.

16

THE skies can't keep their secret!
They tell it to the hills—

The hills just tell the orchards—And they the daffodils!

A bird, by chance, that goes that way Soft overheard the whole.

If I should bribe the little bird,

Who knows but she would tell?

I think I won't, however, It's finer not to know; If summer were an axiom, What sorcery had snow?

So keep your secret, Father! I would not, if I could, Know what the sapphire fellows do, In your new-fashioned world!

17

Who robbed the woods,

The trusting woods?
The unsuspecting trees
Brought out their burrs and mosses
His fantasy to please.
He scanned their trinkets, curious,
He grasped, he bore away.
What will the solemn hemlock,
What will the fir-tree say?

18

Two butterflies went out at noon And waltzed above a stream,

Then stepped straight through the firmament And rested on a beam;

And then together bore away Upon a shining sea,— Though never yet, in any port, Their coming mentioned be.

If spoken by the distant bird, If met in ether sea By frigate or by merchantman, Report was not to me.

19

I STARTED early, took my dog, And visited the sea; The mermaids in the basement Came out to look at me,

And frigates in the upper floor Extended hempen hands, Presuming me to be a mouse Aground, upon the sands.

But no man moved me till the tide Went past my simple shoe, And past my apron and my belt, And past my bodice too,

And made as he would eat me up As wholly as a dew

Upon a dandelion's sleeve— And then I started too.

And he—he followed close behind; I felt his silver heel
Upon my ankle,—then my shoes
Would overflow with pearl.

Until we met the solid town, No man he seemed to know; And bowing with a mighty look At me, the sea withdrew.

20

ARCTURUS is his other name,—
I'd rather call him star!
It's so unkind of science
To go ard interfere!

I pull a flower from the woods,—A monster with a glass Computes the stamens in a breath, And has her in a class.

Whereas I took the butterfly Aforetime in my hat, He sits erect in cabinets, The clover-bells forgot.

What once was heaven, is zenith now. Where I proposed to go

When time's brief masquerade was done, Is mapped, and charted too!

What if the poles should frisk about And stand upon their heads! I hope I'm ready for the worst, Whatever prank betides!

Perhaps the kingdom of Heaven's changed! I hope the children there
Won't be new-fashioned when I come,
And laugh at me, and stare!

I hope the father in the skies Will lift his little girl,— Old-fashioned, naughty, everything,— Over the stile of pearl!

21

An awful tempest mashed the air, The clouds were gaunt and few; A black, as of a spectre's cloak, Hid heaven and earth from view.

The creatures chuckled on the roofs
And whistled in the air,
And shook their fists and gnashed their teeth,
And swung their frenzied hair.

The morning lit, the birds arose; The monster's faded eyes

[79]

Turned slowly to his native coast, And peace was Paradise!

12

An everywhere of silver, With ropes of sand To keep it from effacing The track called land.

^ 23

A BIRD came down the walk:
He did not know I saw;
He bit an angle-worm in halves
And ate the fellow, raw.

And then he drank a dew From a convenient grass,
And then hopped sidewise to the wall To let a beetle pass.

He glanced with rapid eyes
That hurried all abroad,—
They looked like frightened beads, I thought
He stirred his velvet head.

Like one in danger; cautious, I offered him a crumb, And he unrolled his feathers And rowed him softer home

Than oars divide the ocean, Too silver for a seam, Or butterflies, off banks of noon, Leap, plashless, as they swim.

24 (Colingues speace)

) A NARROW fellow in the grass Occasionally rides; You may have met him,—did you not? His notice sudden is.

The grass divides as with a comb, A spotted shaft is seen; And then it closes at your feet And opens further on.

He likes a boggy acre, A floor too cool for corn. Yet when a child, and barefoot, I more than once, at morn,

Have passed, I thought, a whip-lash Unbraiding in the sun,—
When, stooping to secure it,
It wrinkled, and was gone.

Several of nature's people I know, and they know me; I feel for them a transport Of cordiality;

But never met this fellow, Attended or alone,

٠.

Without a tighter breathing, And zero at the bone.

25

THE mushroom is the elf of plants, At evening it is not; At morning in a truffled hut It stops upon a spot

As if it tarried always; And yet its whole career Is shorter than a snake's delay, And fleeter than a tare.

'Tis vegetation's juggler, The germ of alibi; Doth like a bubble antedate, And like a bubble hie.

I feel as if the grass were pleased To have it intermit;
The surreptitious scion
Of summer's circumspect.

Had nature any outcast face, Could she a son contemn, Had nature an Iscariot, That mushroom,—it is him.

24

THERE came a wind like a bugle; It quivered through the grass,

And a green chill upon the heat
So ominous did pass
We barred the windows and the doors
As from an emerald ghost;
The doom's electric moccasin
That very instant passed.
On a strange mob of panting trees,
And fences fled away,

And rivers where the houses ran The living looked that day. The bell within the steeple wild The flying tidings whirled. How much can come And much can go, And yet abide the world!

27

A SPIDER sewed at night Without a light Upon an arc of white. If ruff it was of dame Or shroud of gnome, Himself, himself inform. Of immortality His strategy Was physiognomy.

28

I KNOW a place where summer strives With such a practised frost,

She each year leads her daisies back, Recording briefly, "Lost."

But when the south wind stirs the pools And struggles in the lanes, Her heart misgives her for her vow, And she pours soft refrains

Into the lap of adamant, And spices, and the dew, That stiffens quietly to quartz, Upon her amber shoe.

29

THE one that could repeat the summer day Were greater than itself, though he Minutest of mankind might be.
And who could reproduce the sun, At period of going down—
The lingering and the stain, I mean—
When Orient has been outgrown, And Occident becomes unknown, His name remain.

30

THE wind tapped like a tired man, And like a host, "Come in," I boldly answered; entered then My residence within

A rapid, footless guest, To offer whom a chair Were as impossible as hand A sofa to the air.

No bone had he to bind him, His speech was like the push Of numerous humming-birds at once From a superior bush.

His countenance a billow, His fingers, if he pass, Let go a music, as of tunes Blown tremulous in glass.

He visited, still flitting; Then, like a timid man, Again he tapped—'twas flurriedly— And I became alone.

31

NATURE rarer uses yellow
Than another hue;
Saves she all of that for sunsets,—
Prodigal of blue,

Spending scarlet like a woman, Yellow she affords Only scantly and selectly, Like a lover's words.



THE leaves, like women, interchange Sagacious confidence;

Somewhat of nods, and somewhat of Portentous inference,

The parties in both cases Enjoining secrecy,—Inviolable compact To notoriety.



How happy is the little stone
That rambles in the road alone,
And doesn't care about careers,
And exigencies never fears;
Whose coat of elemental brown
A passing universe put on;
And independent as the sun,
Associates or glows alone,
Fulfilling absolute decree
In casual simplicity.

34

It sounded as if the streets were running, And then the streets stood still. Eclipse was all we could see at the window, And awe was all we could feel.

By and by the boldest stole out of his covert,
To see if time was there.
Nature was in her beryl apron,
Mixing fresher air.

[86]

35

THE rat is the concisest tenant. He pays no rent,—
Repudiates the obligation,
On schemes intent.

Balking our wit
To sound or circumvent,
Hate cannot harm
A foe so reticent.

Neither decree Prohibits him, Lawful as Equilibrium.

36 Exaller .

FREQUENTLY the woods are pink, Frequently are brown; Frequently the hills undress Behind my native town.

Oft a head is crested I was wont to see, And as oft a cranny Where it used to be.

And the earth, they tell me, On its axis turned,— Wonderful rotation By but twelve performed! THE wind begun to rock the grass With threatening tunes and low,—He flung a menace at the earth, A menace at the sky.

The leaves unhooked themselves from trees And started all abroad; The dust did scoop itself like hands And throw away the road.

The wagons quickened on the streets, The thunder hurried slow; The lightning showed a yellow beak, And then a livid claw.

The birds put up the bars to nests, The cattle fled to barns; There came one drop of giant rain, And then, as if the hands

That held the dams had parted hold, The waters wrecked the sky, But overlooked my father's house, Just quartering a tree.

38

South winds jostle them, Bumblebees come, Hover, hesitate, Drink, and are gone. Butterflies pause
On their passage Cashmere;
I, softly plucking,
Present them here!

39 /

Bring me the sunset in a cup,
Reckon the morning's flagons up,
And say how many dew;
Tell me how far the morning leaps,
Tell me what time the weaver sleeps
Who spun the breadths of blue!

Write me how many notes there be In the new robin's ecstasy
Among astonished boughs;
How many trips the tortoise makes,
How many cups the bee partakes,—
The debauchee of dews!

Also, who laid the rainbow's piers,
Also, who leads the docile spheres
By withes of supple blue?
Whose fingers string the stalactite,
Who counts the wampum of the night,
To see that none is due?

Who built this little Alban house
And shut the windows down so close
My spirit cannot see?
Who'll let me out some gala day,

With implements to fly away, Passing pomposity?

40 /

SHE sweeps with many-colored brooms, And leaves the shreds behind;
Oh, housewife in the evening west,
Come back, and dust the pond!

You dropped a purple ravelling in, You dropped an amber thread; And now you've littered all the East With duds of emerald!

And still she plies her spotted brooms, And still the aprons fly, Till brooms fade softly into stars— And then I come away.

41/

LIKE mighty footlights burned the red At bases of the trees,— The far theatricals of day Exhibiting to these.

Twas universe that did applaud While, chiefest of the crowd, Enabled by his royal dress, Myself distinguished God. Where ships of purple gently toss On seas of daffodil, Fantastic sailors mingle, And then—the wharf is still.



BLAZING in gold and quenching in purple, Leaping like leopards to the sky, Then at the feet of the old horizon Laying her spotted face, to die;

Stooping as low as the kitchen window, Touching the roof and tinting the barn, Kissing her bonnet to the meadow,—And the juggler of day is gone!

44

FARTHER in summer than the birds, Pathetic from the grass, A minor nation celebrates Its unobtrusive mass.

No ordinance is seen, So gradual the grace, A pensive custom it becomes, Enlarging loneliness.

Antiquest felt at noon When August, burning low,

[91]

Calls forth this spectral canticle, Repose to typify.

Remit as yet no grace, No furrow on the glow, Yet a druidic difference Enhances nature now.

45

As imperceptibly as grief
The summer lapsed away,—
Too imperceptible, at last,
To seem like perfidy.

A quietness distilled, As twilight long begun, Or Nature, spending with herself Sequestered afternoon.

The dusk drew earlier in,
The morning foreign shone,—
A courteous, yet harrowing grace,
As guest who would be gone.

And thus, without a wing, Or service of a keel, Our summer made her light escape Into the beautiful.

46/

It's early yet for spring;

There's that long town of white to cross Before the blackbirds sing.

It can't be dying,—it's too rouge,— The dead shall go in white. So sunset shuts my question down With clasps of chrysolite.

47

THE gentian weaves her fringes, The maple's loom is red. My departing blossoms Obviate parade.

A brief, but patient illness, An hour to prepare; And one, below this morning, Is where the angels are.

It was a short procession,— The bobolink was there, An aged bee addressed us, And then we knelt in prayer.

We trust that she was willing,— We ask that we may be. Summer, sister, seraph, Let us go with thee!

In the name of the bee And of the butterfly And of the breeze, amen! 49

Gop made a little gentian;
It tried to be a rose
And failed, and all the summer laughed.
But just before the snows
There came a purple creature
That ravished all the hill;
And summer hid her forehead,
And mockery was still.
The frosts were her condition;
The Tyrian would not come
Until the North evoked it.
"Creator! shall I bloom?"

49 /

Besides the autumn poets sing, A few prosaic days A little this side of the snow And that side of the haze.

A few incisive mornings, A few ascetic eves,— Gone Mr. Bryant's golden-rod, And Mr. Thomson's sheaves.

Still is the bustle in the brook, Sealed are the spicy valves; Mesmeric fingers softly touch The eyes of many elves.

Perhaps a squirrel may remain, My sentiments to share.

Grant me, O Lord, a sunny mind, Thy windy will to bear!

50

JT sifts from leaden sieves, It powders all the wood, It fills with alabaster wool The wrinkles of the road.

It makes an even face
Of mountain and of plain,—
Unbroken forehead from the east
Unto the east again.

It reaches to the fence, It wraps it, rail by rail, Till it is lost in fleeces; It flings a crystal veil

On stump and stack and stem,— The summer's empty room, Acres of seams where harvests were, Recordless, but for them.

It ruffles wrists of posts, As ankles of a queen,— Then stills its artisans like ghosts, Denying they have been.

51/

No brigadier throughout the year So civic as the Jay.

[95]

A neighbor and a warrior too, With shrill felicity

Pursuing winds that censure us A February day, The brother of the universe Was never blown away.

The snow and he are intimate; I've often seen them play When heaven looked upon us all With such severity,

I felt apology were due To an insulted sky, Whose pompous frown was nutriment To their temerity.

The pillow of this daring head Is pungent evergreens;
His larder—terse and militant—Unknown, refreshing things;

His character a tonic, His future a dispute; Unfair an immortality That leaves this neighbor out.

52 //

New feet within my garden go, New fingers stir the sod; A troubadour upon the elm Betrays the solitude. New children play upon the green, New weary sleep below; And still the pensive spring returns, And still the punctual snow!

53 //

PINK, small, and punctual, Aromatic, low, Covert in April, Candid in May,

Dear to the moss, Known by the knoll, Next to the robin In every human soul.

Bold little beauty, Bedecked with thee, Nature forswears Antiquity.

(With the first Arbutus.)

54

THE murmur of a bee A witchcraft yieldeth me. If any ask me why, 'Twere easier to die Than tell.

The red upon the hill Taketh away my will;

[97]

If anybody sneer, Take care, for God is here, That's all.

The breaking of the day Addeth to my degree; If any ask me how, Artist, who drew me so, Must tell!

V55 /

PERHAPS you'd like to buy a flower?
But I could never sell.
If you would like to borrow
Until the daffodil

Unties her yellow bonnet Beneath the village door, Until the bees, from clover rows Their hock and sherry draw,

Why, I will lend until just then, But not an hour more!

56

THE pedigree of honey
Does not concern the bee;
A clover, any time, to him
Is aristocracy.

[98]

Some keep the Sabbath going to church; I keep it staying at home, With a bobolink for a chorister, And an orchard for a dome.

Some keep the Sabbath in surplice; I just wear my wings, And instead of tolling the bell for church, Our little sexton sings.

God preaches,—a noted clergyman,—And the sermon is never long; So instead of getting to heaven at last, I'm going all along!

58 /

THE bee is not afraid of me, I know the butterfly; The pretty people in the woods Receive me cordially.

The brooks laugh louder when I come, The breezes madder play. Wherefore, mine eyes, thy silver mists? Wherefore, O summer's day?

59

Some rainbow coming from the fair!
Some vision of the World Cashmere

I confidently see! Or else a peacock's purple train, Feather by feather, on the plain Fritters itself away!

The dreamy butterflies bestir, Lethargic pools resume the whir Of last year's sundered tune. From some old fortress on the sun Baronial bees march, one by one, In murmuring platoon!

The robins stand as thick to-day As flakes of snow stood yesterday, On fence and roof and twig. The orchis binds her feather on For her old lover, Don the Sun, Revisiting the bog!

Without commander, countless, still, The regiment of wood and hill In bright detachment stand. Behold! Whose multitudes are these? The children of whose turbaned seas, Or what Circassian land?

60

THE grass so little has to do,— A sphere of simple green, With only butterflies to brood, And bees to entertain,

[100]

And stir all day to pretty tunes The breezes fetch along, And hold the sunshine in its lap And bow to everything;

And thread the dews all night, like pearls, And make itself so fine,—
A duchess were too common
For such a noticing.

And even when it dies, to pass In odors so divine, As lowly spices gone to sleep, Or amulets of pine.

And then to dwell in sovereign barns, And dream the days away,— The grass so little has to do, I wish I were the hay!

61 /

A LITTLE road not made of man, Enabled of the eye, Accessible to thill of bee, Or cart of butterfly.

If town it have, beyond itself, 'Tis that I cannot say; I only sigh,—no vehicle Bears me along that way.

[101]

A DROP fell on the apple tree, Another on the roof; A half a dozen kissed the eaves, And made the gables laugh.

A few went out to help the brook, That went to help the sea. Myself conjectured, Were they pearls, What necklaces could be!

The dust replaced in hoisted roads, The birds jocoser sung; The sunshine threw his hat away, The orchards spangles hung.

The breezes brought dejected lutes, And bathed them in the glee; The East put out a single flag, And signed the fête away.

63

A something in a summer's day, As slow her flambeaux burn away, Which solemnizes me.

A something in a summer's noon,—An azure depth, a wordless tune, Transcending ecstasy.

[102]

And still within a summer's night A something so transporting bright, I clap my hands to see;

Then veil my too inspecting face, Lest such a subtle, shimmering grace Flutter too far for me.

The wizard-fingers never rest, The purple brook within the breast Still chafes its narrow bed;

Still rears the East her amber flag, Guides still the sun along the crag His caravan of red,

Like flowers that heard the tale of dews, But never deemed the dripping prize Awaited their low brows;

Or bees, that thought the summer's name Some rumor of delirium No summer could for them;

Or Arctic creature, dimly stirred By tropic hint,—some travelled bird Imported to the wood;

Or wind's bright signal to the ear, Making that homely and severe, Contented, known, before

[103]

The heaven unexpected came, To lives that thought their worshipping A too presumptuous psalm.

64/

This is the land the sunset washes, These are the banks of the Yellow Sea; Where it rose, or whither it rushes, These are the western mystery!

Night after night her purple traffic Strews the landing with opal bales; Merchantmen poise upon horizons, Dip, and vanish with fairy sails.

65

Like trains of cars on tracks of plush I hear the level bee:
A jar across the flowers goes,
Their velvet masonry

Withstands until the sweet assault Their chivalry consumes, While he, victorious, tilts away To vanquish other blooms.

His feet are shod with gauze, His helmet is of gold; His breast, a single onyx With chrysoprase, inlaid.

[104]

His labor is a chant, His idleness a tune; Oh, for a bee's experience Of clovers and of noon!



THERE is a flower that bees prefer, And butterflies desire;
To gain the purple democrat
The humming-birds aspire.

And whatsoever insect pass, A honey bears away Proportioned to his several dearth And her capacity.

Her face is rounder than the moon, And ruddier than the gown Of orchis in the pasture, Or rhododendron worn.

She doth not wait for June; Before the world is green Her sturdy little countenance Against the wind is seen,

Contending with the grass, Near kinsman to herself, For privilege of sod and sun, Sweet litigants for life.

[105]

And when the hills are full, And newer fashions blow, Doth not retract a single spice For pang of jealousy.

Her public is the noon, Her providence the sun, Her progress by the bee proclaimed In sovereign, swerveless tune.

The bravest of the host, Surrendering the last, Nor even of defeat aware When cancelled by the frost.

67 /

PRESENTIMENT is that long shadow on the lawn Indicative that suns go down;
The notice to the startled grass
That darkness is about to pass.

68 /

As children bid the guest good-night, And then reluctant turn, My flowers raise their pretty lips, Then put their nightgowns on.

As children caper when they wake, Merry that it is morn, My flowers from a hundred crtbs Will peep, and prance again.

[106]

Angels in the early morning May be seen the dews among, Stooping, plucking, smiling, flying: Do the buds to them belong?

Angels when the sun is hottest May be seen the sands among, Stooping, plucking, sighing, flying; Parched the flowers they bear along.

70//

So bashful when I spied her, So pretty, so ashamed! So hidden in her leaflets, Lest anybody find;

So breathless till I passed her, So helpless when I turned And bore her, struggling, blushing, Her simple haunts beyond!

For whom I robbed the dingle, For whom betrayed the dell, Many will doubtless ask me, But I shall never tell!

71

It makes no difference abroad, The seasons fit the same,

[107]

The mornings blossom into noons, And split their pods of flame.

Wild-flowers kindle in the woods, The brooks brag all the day; No blackbird bates his jargoning For passing Calvary.

Auto-da-fé and judgment Are nothing to the bee; His separation from his rose To him seems misery.

72

THE mountain sat upon the plain In his eternal chair, His observation omnifold, His inquest everywhere.

The seasons prayed around his knees, Like children round a sire: Grandfather of the days is he, Of dawn the ancestor.

73/

I'll tell you how the sun rose,—
A ribbon at a time.
The steeples swam in amethyst,
The news like squirrels ran.

The hills untied their bonnets, The bobolinks begun.

[108]

Then I said softly to myself, "That must have been the sun!"

But how he set, I know not.
There seemed a purple stile
Which little yellow boys and girls
Were climbing all the while

Till when they reached the other side, A dominie in gray Put gently up the evening bars, And led the flock away.

74 /

THE butterfly's assumption-gown, In chrysoprase apartments hung, This afternoon put on.

How condescending to descend, And be of buttercups the friend In a New England town!

75

OF all the sounds despatched abroad, There's not a charge to me Like that old measure in the boughs, That phraseless melody

The wind does, working like a hand Whose fingers comb the sky,

[109]

Then quiver down, with tufts of tune Permitted gods and me.

Inheritance it is to us Beyond the art to earn, Beyond the trait to take away By robber, since the gain

Is gotten not of fingers, And inner than the bone, Hid golden for the whole of days, And even in the urn

I cannot vouch the merry dust Do not arise and play In some odd pattern of its own Some quainter holiday.

When winds go round and round in bands, And thrum upon the door, And birds take places overhead, To bear them orchestra,

I crave him grace of summer boughs, If such an outcast be, Who never heard that fleshless chant Rise solemn on the tree,

As if some caravan of sound Off deserts, in the sky, Had parted rank, Then knit, and swept In seamless company. 76/

Apparently with no surprise To any happy flower, The frost beheads it at its play In accidental power.

The blond assassin passes on, The sun proceeds unmoved To measure off another day For an approving God.

" /

'Twas later when the summer went Than when the <u>cricket</u> came, And yet we knew that gentle clock Meant nought but going home.

Twas sooner when the cricket went Than when the winter came, Yet that pathetic pendulum Keeps esoteric time.

78

THESE are the days when birds come back, A very few, a bird or two,
To take a backward look.

These are the days when skies put on The old, old sophistries of June,—
A blue and gold mistake.

[111]

Oh, fraud that cannot cheat the bee, Almost thy plausibility Induces my belief,

Till ranks of seeds their witness bear, And softly through the altered air Hurries a timid leaf!

Oh, sacrament of summer days, Oh, last communion in the haze, Permit a child to join,

Thy sacred emblems to partake, Thy consecrated bread to break, Taste thine immortal wine!

79

The morns are meeker than they were, The nuts are getting brown; The berry's cheek is plumper, The rose is out of town.

The maple wears a gayer scarf, The field a scarlet gown. Lest I should be old-fashioned, I'll put a trinket on.

。 *~*

JHE sky is low, the clouds are mean, A travelling flake of snow Across a barn or through a rut Debates if it will go.

[112]

A narrow wind complains all day How some one treated him; Nature, like us, is sometimes caught Without her diadem.

81

J THINK the hemlock likes to stand Upon a marge of snow; It suits his own austerity, And satisfies an awe

That men must slake in wilderness, Or in the desert cloy,— An instinct for the hoar, the bald, Lapland's necessity.

The hemlock's nature thrives on cold; The gnash of northern winds Is sweetest nutriment to him, His best Norwegian wines.

To satin races he is nought; But children on the Don Beneath his tabernacles play, And Dnieper wrestlers run.

82

THERE'S a certain slant of light On winter afternoons, That oppresses, like the weight Of cathedral tunes.

[113]

Heavenly hurt it gives us; We can find no scar, But internal difference Where the meanings are.

None may teach it anything, 'Tis the seal, despair,—
An imperial affliction
Sent us of the air.

When it comes, the landscape listens, Shadows hold their breath; When it goes, 'tis like the distance On the look of death.

83

Ir will be Summer eventually— Ladies with parasols, Sauntering gentlemen with canes, And little gals with dolls

Will tint the pallid landscape As 'twere a bright bouquet, Though drifted deep in Parian The village lies to-day.

The lilacs, bending many a year, Will sway with purple load; The bees will not despise the tune Their forefathers have hummed;

The wild rose redden in the bog, The aster on the hill

[114]

Her everlasting fashion set, And covenant gentians frill,

Till summer folds her miracle As women do their gown, Or priests adjust the symbols When sacrament is done.

, Saciamental tone

A LIGHT exists in spring

Not present on the year

At any other period.

When March is scarcely here

A color stands abroad
On solitary hills
That science cannot overtake,
But human nature feels.

It waits upon the lawn;
It shows the furthest tree
Upon the furthest slope we know;
It almost speaks to me.

Then, as horizons step,
Or noons report away,
Without the formula of sound,
It passes, and we stay:

A quality of loss
Affecting our content,

As trade had suddenly encroached Upon a sacrament.

85 /

A LADY red upon the hill Her annual secret keeps; A lady white within the field In placid lily sleeps!

The tidy breezes with their brooms Sweep vale, and hill, and tree! Prithee, my pretty housewives! Who may expected be?

The neighbors do not yet suspect!
The woods exchange a smile—
Orchard, and buttercup, and bird—
In such a little while!

And yet how still the landscape stands,
How nonchalant the wood,
As if the resurrection
Were nothing very odd!

86 //

DEAR March, come in!
How glad I am!
I looked for you before.
Put down your hat—
You must have walked—

[116]

How out of breath you are!
Dear March, how are you?
And the rest?
Did you leave Nature well?
Oh, March, come right upstairs with me,
I have so much to tell!

I got your letter, and the bird's;
The maples never knew
That you were coming,—I declare,
How red their faces grew!
But, March, forgive me—
And all those hills
You left for me to hue;
There was no purple suitable,
You took it all with you.

Who knocks? That April!
Lock the door!
I will not be pursued!
He stayed away a year, to call
When I am occupied.
But trifles look so trivial
As soon as you have come,
That blame is just as dear an praise
And praise as mere as blame.

87

Nor knowing when the dawn will come I open every door;
Or has it feathers like a bird,
Or billows like a shore?

[117]

A MURMUR in the trees to note, Not loud enough for wind; A star not far enough to seek, Nor near enough to find;

A long, long yellow on the lawn, A hubbub as of feet; Not audible, as ours to us, But dapper, more sweet;

A hurrying home of little men
To houses unperceived,—
All this, and more, if I should tell,
Would never be believed.

Of robins in the trundle bed
How many I espy
Whose nightgowns could not hide the wings,
Authough I heard them try!

But then I promised ne'er to tell; How could I break my word? So go your way and I'll go mine,— No fear you'll miss the road.

89

To my quick ear the leaves conferred;
The bushes they were bells;
I could not find a privacy
From Nature's sentinels.

[118]

In cave if I presumed to hide,
The walls began to tell;
Creation seemed a mighty crack
To make me visible.

90

High from the earth I heard a bird; He trod upon the trees As he esteemed them trifles, And then he spied a breeze, And situated softly Upon a pile of wind Which in a perturbation Nature had left behind. A joyous-going fellow I gathered from his talk, Which both of benediction And badinage partook, Without apparent burden, I learned, in leafy wood He was the faithful father Of a dependent brood; And this untoward transport His remedy for care,-A contrast to our respites. How different we are!

91

THE spider as an artist
Has never been employed

Though his surpassing merit Is freely certified

By every broom and Bridget
Throughout a Christian land.
Neglected son of genius,
I take thee by the hand.

92

What mystery pervades a well!
The water lives so far,
Like neighbor from another world
Residing in a jar.

The grass does not appear afraid;
I often wonder he
Can stand so close and look so bold
At what is dread to me.

Related somehow they may be,—
The sedge stands next the sea,
Where he is floorless, yet of fear
No evidence gives he.

But nature is a stranger yet;
The ones that cite her most
Have never passed her haunted house,
Nor simplified her ghost.

To pity those that know her not Is helped by the regret

[120]

That those who know her, know her less The nearer her they get.

93 🗸

To make a prairie it takes a clover and one bee,-And revery.
The revery alone will do
If bees are few.

94 1/

Jr's like the light,—
A fashionless delight,
It's like the bee,—
A dateless melody.

It's like the woods, Private like breeze, Phraseless, yet it stirs The proudest trees.

It's like the morning,—
Best when it's done,—
The everlasting clocks
Chime noon.

95

Sweet is the swamp with its secrets,
Until we meet a snake;
'Tis then we sigh for houses,
And our departure take

[121]

At that enthralling gallop
That only childhood knows.
A snake is summer's treason,
And guile is where it goes.

96

Could I but ride indefinite, As doth the meadow-bee, And visit only where I liked, And no man visit me,

And flirt all day with buttercups, And marry whom I may, And dwell a little everywhere, Or better, run away

With no police to follow,
Or chase me if I do,
Till I should jump peninsulas
To get away from you,—

I said, but just to be a bee
Upon a raft of air,
And row in nowhere all day long,
And anchor off the bar,—
What liberty! So captives deem
Who tight in dungeons are.

97 /

THE moon was but a chin of gold A night or two ago,

[122]

And now she turns her perfect face Upon the world below.

Her forehead is of amplest blond; Her cheek like beryl stone; Her eye unto the summer dew The likest I have known.

Her lips of amber never part;
But what must be the smile
Upon her friend she could bestow
Were such her silver will!

And what a privilege to be
But the remotest star!
For certainly her way might pass
Beside your twinkling door.

Her bonnet is the firmament,
The universe her shoe,
The stars the trinkets at her belt,
Her dimities of blue.

98

THE bat is dun with wrinkled wings Like fallow article, And not a song pervades his lips, Or none perceptible.

His small umbrella, quaintly halved, Describing in the air

[123]

An arc alike inscrutable,— Elate philosopher!

Deputed from what firmament
Of what astute abode,
Empowered with what malevolence
Auspiciously withheld.

To his adroit Creator
Ascribe no less the praise;
Beneficent, believe me,
His eccentricities.

99

You've seen balloons set, haven't you? So stately they ascend It is as swans discarded you For duties diamond.

Their liquid feet go softly out
Upon a sea of blond;
They spurn the air as 'twere too mean
For creatures so renowned.

Their ribbons just beyond the eye,
They struggle some for breath,
And yet the crowd applauds below;
They would not encore death.

The gilded creature strains and spins, Trips frantic in a tree,

[124]

Then, how the fire ebbs like billows, Touching all the grass With a departing, sapphire feature, As if a duchess pass!

How a small dusk crawls on the village
Till the houses blot;
And the odd flambeaux no men carry
Glimmer on the spot!

Now it is night in nest and kennel, And where was the wood, Just a dome of abyss is nodding Into solitude!—

These are the visions baffled Guido;
Titian never told;
Domenichino dropped the pencil,
Powerless to unfold.

104

THE murmuring of bees has ceased;
But murmuring of some
Posterior, prophetic,
Has simultaneous come,—
The lower metres of the year,
When nature's laugh is done,—
The Revelations of the book
Whose Genesis is June.



PART THREE

LOVE

It's all I have to bring to-day,
This, and my heart beside,
This, and my heart, and all the fields,
And all the meadows wide.
Be sure you count, should I forget,—
Some one the sum could tell,—
This, and my heart, and all the bees
Which in the clover dwell.

Mine by the right of the white election! Mine by the royal seal! Mine by the sign in the scarlet prison Bars cannot conceal!

Mine, here in vision and in veto! Mine, by the grave's repeal Titled, confirmed,—delirious charter! Mine, while the ages steal!

2

You left me, sweet, two legacies,—A legacy of love
A Heavenly Father would content,
Had He the offer of;

You left me boundaries of pain Capacious as the sea, Between eternity and time, Your consciousness and me.

3

ALTER? When the hills do. Falter? When the sun Question if his glory Be the perfect one.

Surfeit? When the daffodil Doth of the dew:

[131]

Even as herself, O friend! I will of you!

ELYSIUM is as far as to The very nearest room, If in that room a friend await Felicity or doom.

What fortitude the soul contains, That it can so endure The accent of a coming foot, The opening of a door!

5

Doubt me, my dim companion! Why, God would be content With but a fraction of the love Poured thee without a stint. The whole of me, forever, What more the woman can,—Say quick, that I may dower thee With last delight I own!

It cannot be my spirit,
For that was thine before;
I ceded all of dust I knew,—
What opulence the more
Had I, a humble maiden,
Whose farthest of degree
Was that she might

Some distant heaven, Dwell timidly with thee!

6

JF you were coming in the fall, I'd brush the summer by With half a smile and half a spurn, As housewives do a fly.

If I could see you in a year,
I'd wind the months in balls,
And put them each in separate drawers,
Until their time befalls.

If only centuries delayed, I'd count them on my hand, Subtracting till my fingers dropped Into Van Diemen's land.

If certain, when this life was out, That yours and mine should be, I'd toss it yonder like a rind, And taste eternity.

But now, all ignorant of the length Of time's uncertain wing, It goads me, like the goblin bee, That will not state its sting.

7

I HIDE myself within my flower, That wearing on your breast, You, unsuspecting, wear me too—And angels know the rest.

I hide myself within my flower,
That, fading from your vase,
You, unsuspecting, feel for me
Almost a loneliness.

THAT I did always love, I bring thee proof:
That till I loved
I did not love enough.

That I shall love alway, I offer thee That love is life, And life hath immortality.

This, dost thou doubt, sweet? Then have I Nothing to show But Calvary.

Have you got a brook in your little heart, Where bashful flowers blow, And blushing birds go down to drink, And shadows tremble so?

And nobody knows, so still it flows, That any brook is there;

And yet your little draught of life Is daily drunken there.

Then look out for the little brook in March, When the rivers overflow, And the snows come hurrying from the hills, And the bridges often go.

And later, in August it may be, When the meadows parching lie, Beware, lest this little brook of life Some burning noon go dry!

10

As if some little Arctic flower,
Upon the polar hem,
Went wandering down the latitudes,
Until it puzzled came
To continents of summer,
To firmaments of sun,
To strange, bright crowds of flowers,
And birds of foreign tongue!
I say, as if this little flower
To Eden wandered in—
What then? Why, nothing, only
Your inference therefrom!

11

My river runs to thee: Blue sea, wilt welcome me? My river waits reply. Oh sea, look graciously!

I'll fetch thee brooks From spotted nooks,—

Say, sea, Take me!

12

I cannot live with you,
It would be life,
And life is over there
Behind the shelf boundway

The sexton keeps the key to, Putting up Our life, his porcelain, Like a cup

Discarded of the housewife, Quaint or broken; A newer Sèvres pleases, Old ones crack.

I could not die with you, For one must wait To shut the other's gaze down,-You could not.

And I, could I stand by And see you freeze,

[136]

Without my right of frost, Death's privilege?

Nor could I rise with you, Because your face Would put out Jesus', That new grace

Glow plain and foreign On my homesick eye, Except that you, than he Shone closer by.

They'd judge us—how?
For you served Heaven, you know,
Or sought to;
I could not,

Because you saturated sight, And I had no more eyes For sordid excellence As Paradise.

And were you lost, I would be, Though my name Rang loudest On the heavenly fame.

And were you saved, And I condemned to be Where you were not, That self were hell to me.

[137]

So we must keep apart, You there, I here, With just the door ajar That oceans are, And prayer, And that pale sustenance, Despair!

13

 $\mathcal{T}_{\text{HERE}}$ came a day at summer's full Entirely for me; I thought that such were for the saints, Where revelations be.

The sun, as common, went abroad, The flowers, accustomed, blew, As if no sail the solstice passed That maketh all things new.

The time was scarce profaned by speech; The symbol of a word Was needless, as at sacrament The wardrobe of our Lord.

Each was to each the sealed church, Permitted to commune this time, Lest we too awkward show At supper of the Lamb.

The hours slid fast, as hours will, Clutched tight by greedy hands;

[138]

So faces on two decks look back, Bound to opposing lands.

And so, when all the time had failed, Without external sound, Each bound the other's crucifix, We gave no other bond.

Sufficient troth that we shall rise—Deposed, at length, the grave—To that new marriage, justified Through Calvaries of Love!

14

I'm ceded, I've stopped being theirs; The name they dropped upon my face With water, in the country church, Is finished using now, And they can put it with my dolls, My childhood, and the string of spools I've finished threading too.

Baptized before without the choice, But this time consciously, of grace Unto supremest name, Called to my full, the crescent dropped, Existence's whole arc filled up With one small diadem.

My second rank, too small the first, Crowned, crowing on my father's breast, A half unconscious queen; But this time, adequate, erect, With will to choose or to reject, And I choose—just a throne.

15

'Twas a long parting, but the time For interview had come; Before the judgment-seat of God, The last and second time

These fleshless lovers met, A heaven in a gaze, A heaven of heavens, the privilege Of one another's eyes.

No lifetime set on them, Apparelled as the new Unborn, except they had beheld, Born everlasting now.

Was bridal e'er like this? A paradise, the host, And cherubim and seraphim The most familiar guest.

14

I'm wife; I've finished that, That other state; I'm Czar, I'm woman now: It's safer so. How odd the girl's life looks Behind this soft eclipse! I think that earth seems so To those in heaven now.

This being comfort, then That other kind was pain; But why compare? I'm wife! stop there!

17

SHE rose to his requirement, dropped The playthings of her life To take the honorable work Of woman and of wife.

If aught she missed in her new day Of amplitude, or awe, Or first prospective, or the gold In using wore away,

It lay unmentioned, as the sea Develops pearl and weed, But only to himself is known The fathoms they abide.

18

Come slowly, Eden! Lips unused to thee, Bashful, sip thy jasmines, As the fainting bee,

[141]

Reaching late his flower, Round her chamber hums, Counts his nectars—enters, And is lost in balms!

19

OF all the souls that stand create I have elected one. When sense from spirit files away, And subterfuge is done;

When that which is and that which was Apart, intrinsic, stand, And this brief tragedy of flesh Is shifted like a sand;

When figures show their royal front And mists are carved away,— Behold the atom I preferred To all the lists of clay!

20

J HAVE no life but this, To lead it here; Nor any death, but lest Dispelled from there;

Nor tie to earths to come, Nor action new, Except through this extent, The realm of you.

[142]

Your riches taught me poverty.

Myself a millionaire
In little wealths,—as girls could boast,—Till broad as Buenos Ayre,

You drifted your dominions A different Peru; And I esteemed all poverty, For life's estate with you.

Of mines I little know, myself, But just the names of gems,— The colors of the commonest; And scarce of diadems

So much that, did I meet the queen, Her glory I should know: But this must be a different wealth, To miss it beggars so.

I'm sure 'tis India all day
To those who look on you
Without a stint, without a blame,—
Might I but be the Jew!

I'm sure it is Golconda,
Beyond my power to deem,—
To have a smile for mine each day,
How better than a gem!

At least, it solaces to know That there exists a gold,

Although I prove it just in time Its distance to behold!

It's far, far treasure to surmise, And estimate the pearl That slipped my simple fingers through While just a girl at school!

22

I gave myself to him, And took himself for pay. The solemn contract of a life Was ratified this way.

The wealth might disappoint, Myself a poorer prove Than this great purchaser suspect, The daily own of Love

Depreciate the vision; But, till the merchant buy, Still fable, in the isles of spice, The subtle cargoes lie.

At least, 'tis mutual risk,—
Some found it mutual gain;
Sweet debt of Life,—each night to owe,
Insolvent, every noon.

23

"Going to him! Happy letter! Tell him—— Tell him the page I didn't write; Tell him I only said the syntax,
And left the verb and the pronoun out.
Tell him just how the fingers hurried,
Then how they waded, slow, slow, slow;
And then you wished you had eyes in your pages,
So you could see what moved them so.

"Tell him it wasn't a practised writer,
You guessed, from the way the sentence toiled;
You could hear the bodice tug, behind you,
As if it held but the might of a child;
You almost pitied it, you, it worked so.
Tell him— No, you may quibble there,
For it would split his heart to know it,
And then you and I were silenter.

"Tell him night finished before we finished,
And the old clock kept neighing 'day!'
And you got sleepy and begged to be ended—
What could it hinder so, to say?

Tell him just how she sealed you, cautious,
But if he ask where you are hid
Until to-morrow,—happy letter!
Gesture, coquette, and shake your head!"

24

THE way I read a letter's this:
'Tis first I lock the door,
And push it with my fingers next,
For transport it be sure.

And then I go the furthest off To counteract a knock; Then draw my little letter forth And softly pick its lock.

Then, glancing narrow at the wall, And narrow at the floor, For firm conviction of a mouse Not exorcised before,

Peruse how infinite I am
To—no one that you know!
And sigh for lack of heaven,—but not
The heaven the creeds bestow.

25

Wild nights! Wild nights! Were I with thee,
Wild nights should be
Our luxury!

Futile the winds
To a heart in port,—
Done with the compass,
Done with the chart.

Rowing in Eden! Ah! the sea! Might I but moor To-night in thee!

[146]

THE night was wide, and furnished scant With but a single star,
That often as a cloud it met
Blew out itself for fear.

The wind pursued the little bush, And drove away the leaves November left; then clambered up And fretted in the eaves.

No squirrel went abroad; A dog's belated feet Like intermittent plush were heard Adown the empty street.

To feel if blinds be fast, And closer to the fire Her little rocking-chair to draw, And shiver for the poor,

The housewife's gentle task.
"How pleasanter," said she
Unto the sofa opposite,
"The sleet than May—no thee!"

27

Dip the harebell loose her girdle To the lover bee, Would the bee the harebell hallow Much as formerly?

[147]

Did the paradise, persuaded, Yield her moat of pearl, Would the Eden be an Eden, Or the earl an earl?

28

A CHARM invests a face Imperfectly beheld,— The lady dare not lift her veil For fear it be dispelled.

But peers beyond her mesh, And wishes, and denies,— Lest interview annul a want That image satisfies.

29

THE rose did caper on her cheek, Her Bodice rose and fell, Her pretty speech, like drunken men, Did stagger pitiful.

Her fingers fumbled at her work,— Her needle would not go; What ailed so smart a little maid It puzzled me to know,

Till opposite I spied a cheek That bore another rose; Just opposite, another speech That like the drunkard goes;

[148]

A vest that, like the bodice, danced To the immortal tune,—
Till those two troubled little clocks
Ticked softly into one.

30

In lands I never saw, they say, Immortal Alps look down, Whose bonnets touch the firmament, Whose sandals touch the town,—

Meek at whose everlasting feet A myriad daisies play. Which, sir, are you, and which am I, Upon an August day?

31

THE moon is distant from the sea, And yet with amber hands
She leads him, docile as a boy,
Along appointed sands.

He never misses a degree; Obedient to her eye, He comes just so far toward the town, Just so far goes away.

Oh, Signor, thine the amber hand, And mine the distant sea,— Obedient to the last command Thine eyes impose on me.

[149]

He put the belt around my life,—
I heard the buckle snap,
And turned away, imperial,
My lifetime folding up
Deliberate, as a duke would do
A kingdom's title-deed,—
Henceforth a dedicated sort,
A member of the cloud.

Yet not too far to come at call, And do the little toils That make the circuit of the rest, And deal occasional smiles To lives that stoop to notice mine And kindly ask it in,— Whose invitation, knew you not For whom I must decline?

33

I HELD a jewel in my fingers
And went to sleep.
The day was warm, and winds were prosy
I said: "Twill keep." Loneur wo

I woke and chid my honest fingers,— The gem was gone; free 3 ... 5 And now an amethyst remembrance Is all I own.

[150]

What if I say I shall not wait?
What if I burst the fleshly gate
And pass, escaped, to thee?
What if I file this mortal off,
See where it hurt me,—that's enough,—
And wade in liberty?

They cannot take us any more,—
Dungeons may call, and guns implore;
Unmeaning now, to me,
As laughter was an hour ago,
Or laces, or a travelling show,
Or who died yesterday!

35

Proud of my broken heart since thou didst break it,
Proud of the pain I did not feel till thee,
Proud of my night since thou with moons dost slake it,
Not to partake thy passion, my humility.

36

My worthiness is all my doubt, His merit all my fear, Contrasting which, my qualities Do lowlier appear;

Lest I should insufficient prove For his beloved need, The chiefest apprehension Within my loving creed.

[151]

So I, the undivine abode
Of his elect content,
Conform my soul as 'twere a church
Unto her sacrament.

37

Love is anterior to life, Posterior to death, Initial of creation, and The exponent of breath.

28

One blessing had I, than the rest So larger to my eyes That I stopped gauging, satisfied, For this enchanted size.

It was the limit of my dream,
The focus of my prayer,—
A perfect, paralyzing bliss
Contented as despair.

I knew no more of want or cold, Phantasms both become, For this new value in the soul, Supremest earthly sum.

The heaven below the heaven above Obscured with ruddier hue.
Life's latitude leant over-full;
The judgment perished, too.

[152]

Why joys so scantily disburse,
Why Paradise defer,
Why floods are served to us in bowls,—
I speculate no more.

39

When roses cease to bloom, dear, And violets are done, When bumble-bees in solemn flight Have passed beyond the sun,

The hand that paused to gather Upon this summer's day Will idle lie, in Auburn,—
Then take my flower, pray!

40

Summer for thee grant I may be When summer days are flown! Thy music still when whippoorwill And oriole are done!

For thee to bloom, I'll skip the tomb And sow my blossoms o'er! Pray gather me, Anemone, Thy flower forevermore!

41

Split the lark and you'll find the music, Bulb after bulb, in silver rolled, Scantily dealt to the summer morning, Saved for your ear when lutes be old.

Loose the flood, you shall find it patent,
Gush after gush, reserved for you;
Scarlet experiment! sceptic Thomas,
Now, do you doubt that your bird was true?

42

To lose thee, sweeter than to gain All other hearts I knew. 'Tis true the drought is destitute, But then I had the dew!

The Caspian has its realms of sand, Its other realm of sea; Without the sterile perquisite No Caspian could be.

43

Poor little heart!
Did they forget thee?
Then dinna care! Then dinna care!

Proud little heart!
Did they forsake thee?
Be debonair! Be debonair!

Frail little heart!
I would not break thee:
Could'st credit me? Could'st credit me?

[154]

Gay little heart!
Like morning glory
Thou'll wilted be; thou'll wilted be!

44

THERE is a word

Which bears a sword

Can pierce an armed man.

It hurls its barbed syllables,—

At once is mute again.

But where it fell

The saved will tell

On patriotic day,

Some epauletted brother

Gave his breath away.

Wherever runs the breathless sun,
Wherever roams the day,
There is its noiseless onset,
There is its victory!
Behold the keenest marksman!
The most accomplished shot!
Time's sublimest target
Is a soul "forgot"!

45

HE fumbles at your spirit
As players at the keys
Before they drop full music on;
He stuns you by degrees,

Prepares your brittle substance For the ethereal blow, By fainter hammers, further heard, Then nearer, then so slow

Your breath has time to straighten,
Your brain to bubble cool,—
Deals one imperial thunderbolt
That scalps your naked soul.

46

HEART, we will forget him!
You and I, to-night!
You may forget the warmth he gave,
I will forget the light.

When you have done, pray tell me, That I my thoughts may dim; Haste! lest while you're lagging, I may remember him!

47)

FATHER, I bring thee not myself,—
That were the little load;
I bring thee the imperial heart
I had not strength to hold.

The heart I cherished in my own
Till mine too heavy grew,
Yet strangest, heavier since it went,
Is it too large for you?

WE outgrow love like other things And put it in the drawer, Till it an antique fashion shows Like costumes grandsires wore.

49

Not with a club the heart is broken,
Nor with a stone;
A whip, so small you could not see it,
I've known
To lash the magic creature
Till it fell,
Yet that whip's name too noble
Then to tell.

Magnanimous of bird By boy descried, To sing unto the stone Of which it died.

50

My friend must be a bird,
Because it flies!
Mortal my friend must be,
Because it dies!
Barbs has it, like a bee.
Ah, curious friend,
Thou puzzlest me!

[157]

He touched me, so I live to know
That such a day, permitted so,
I groped upon his breast.
It was a boundless place to me,
And silenced, as the awful sea
Puts minor streams to rest.

And now, I'm different from before,
As if I breathed superior air,
Or brushed a royal gown;
My feet, too, that had wandered so,
My gypsy face transfigured now
To tenderer renown.

52

LET me not mar that perfect dream
By an auroral stain,
But so adjust my daily night
That it will come again.

53

J LIVE with him, I see his face; I go no more away For visitor, or sundown; Death's single privacy,

The only one forestalling mine, And that by right that he Presents a claim invisible, No wedlock granted me.

[158]

I live with him, I hear his voice, I stand alive to-day To witness to the certainty Of immortality

Taught me by Time,—the lower way,
Conviction every day,—
That life like this is endless,
Be judgment what it may.

54

I envy seas whereon he rides, I envy spokes of wheels Of chariots that him convey, I envy speechless hills

That gaze upon his journey; How easy all can see What is forbidden utterly As heaven, unto me!

I envy nests of sparrows
That dot his distant eaves,
The wealthy fly upon his pane,
The happy, happy leaves

That just abroad his window Have summer's leave to be, The earrings of Pizarro Could not obtain for me.

I envy light that wakes him, And bells that boldly ring To tell him it is noon abroad,— Myself his noon could bring,

Yet interdict my blossom
And abrogate my bee,
Lest noon in everlasting night
Drop Gabriel and me.

55

A solemn thing it was, I said, A woman white to be, And wear, if God should count me fit Her hallowed mystery.

A timid thing to drop a life
Into the purple well,
Too plummetless that it come back
Eternity until.

PART FOUR

TIME AND ETERNITY

One dignity delays for all, One mitred afternoon. None can avoid this purple, None evade this crown.

Coach it insures, and footmen, Chamber and state and throng; Bells, also, in the village, As we ride grand along.

What dignified attendants, What service when we pause! How loyally at parting Their hundred hats they raise!

How pomp surpassing ermine, When simple you and I Present our meek escutcheon, And claim the rank to die!

2 %.

Delayed till she had ceased to know,
Delayed till in its vest of snow
Her loving bosom lay.
An hour behind the fleeting breath,
Later by just an hour than death,—
Oh, lagging yesterday!

Could she have guessed that it would be; Could but a crier of the glee Have climbed the distant hill;

[163]

Had not the bliss so slow a pace,— Who knows but this surrendered face Were undefeated still?

Oh, if there may departing be
Any forgot by victory
In her imperial round,
Show them this meek apparelled thing,
That could not stop to be a king,
Doubtful if it be crowned!

3/

DEPARTED to the judgment, A mighty afternoon; Great clouds like ushers leaning, Creation looking on.

The flesh surrendered, cancelled, The bodiless begun; Two worlds, like audiences, disperse And leave the soul alone.

4

SAFE in their alabaster chambers, Untouched by morning and untouched by noon, Sleep the meek members of the resurrection, Rafter of satin, and roof of stone.

Light laughs the breeze in her castle of sunshine; Babbles the bee in a stolid ear; Pipe the sweet birds in ignorant cadence,— Ah, what sagacity perished here! Grand go the years in the crescent above them; Worlds scoop their arcs, and firmaments row, Diadems drop and Doges surrender, Soundless as dots on a disk of snow.

5

On this long storm the rainbow rose, On this late morn the sun; The clouds, like listless elephants, Horizons straggled down.

The birds rose smiling in their nests, The gales indeed were done; Alas! how heedless were the eyes On whom the summer shone!

The quiet nonchalance of death No daybreak can bestir; The slow archangel's syllables Must awaken her.

6

My cocoon tightens, colors tease, I'm feeling for the air; A dim capacity for wings Degrades the dress I wear.

A power of butterfly must be The aptitude to fly, Meadows of majesty concedes And easy sweeps of sky. So I must baffle at the hint And cipher at the sign, And make much blunder, if at last I take the clew divine.

7

EXULTATION is the going
Of an inland soul to sea,—
Past the houses, past the headlands,
Into deep eternity!

Bred as we, among the mountains, Can the sailor understand The divine intoxication Of the first league out from land?

Look back on time with kindly eyes, He doubtless did his best; How softly sinks his trembling sun In human nature's west!

9 5

A TRAIN went through a burial gate,
A bird broke forth and sang,
And trilled, and quivered, and shook his throat
Till all the churchyard rang;

And then adjusted his little notes, And bowed and sang again.

[166]

Doubtless, he thought it meet of him To say good-by to men.

10

J DIED for beauty, but was scarce Adjusted in the tomb, When one who died for truth was lain In an adjoining room.

He questioned softly why I failed?
"For beauty," I replied.
"And I for truth,—the two are one;
We brethren are," he said.

And so, as kinsmen met a night, We talked between the rooms, Until the moss had reached our lips, And covered up our names.

11 6

How many times these low feet staggered, Only the soldered mouth can tell; Try! can you stir the awful rivet? Try! can you lift the hasps of steel?

Stroke the cool forehead, hot so often, Lift, if you can, the listless hair; Handle the adamantine fingers Never a thimble more shall wear.

Buzz the dull flies on the chamber window; Brave shines the sun through the freckled pane;

[167]

Fearless the cobweb swings from the ceiling-Indolent housewife, in daisies lain!

12:5-

J LIKE a look of agony,
Because I know it's true;
Men do not sham convulsion,
Nor simulate a throe.

The eyes glaze once, and that is death. Impossible to feign
The beads upon the forehead
By homely anguish strung.

13

That short, potential stir
That each can make but once,
That bustle so illustrious
'Tis_almost consequence,

Is the *éclat* of death.
Oh, thou unknown renown
That not a beggar would accept,
Had he the power to spurn!

14 /

J WENT to thank her,
But she slept;
Her bed a funnelled stone,
With nosegays at the head and foot,
That travellers had thrown,

Who went to thank her; But she slept. 'Twas short to cross the sea To look upon her like, alive, But turning back 'twas slow.

15 /

J've seen a dying eye
Run round and round a room
In search of something, as it seemed,
Then cloudier become;
And then, obscure with fog,
And then be soldered down,
Without disclosing what it be,
'Twere blessed to have seen.

16

THE clouds their backs together laid,
The north begun to push,
The forests galloped till they fell,
The lightning skipped like mice;
The thunder crumbled like a stuff—
How good to be safe in tombs,
Where nature's temper cannot reach,
Nor vengeance ever comes!

1 17 11

I never saw a moor, I never saw the sea;

[169]

Yet know I how the heather looks, And what a wave must be.

I never spoke with God, Nor visited in heaven; Yet certain am I of the spot As if the chart were given.

18

God permits industrious angels Afternoons to play. I met one,—forgot my school-mates, All, for him, straightway.

God calls home the angels promptly At the setting sun; I missed mine. How dreary marbles, After playing Crown!

19

To know just how he suffered would be dear; To know if any human eyes were near To whom he could intrust his wavering gaze, Until it settled firm on Paradise.

To know if he was patient, part content, Was dying as he thought, or different; Was it a pleasant day to die, And did the sunshine face his way?

What was his furthest mind, of home, or God, Or what the distant say

[170]

At news that he ceased human nature On such a day?

And wishes, had he any?
Just his sigh, accented,
Had been legible to me.
And was he confident until
Ill fluttered out in everlasting well?

And if he spoke, what name was best, What first, What one broke off with At the drowsiest?

Was he afraid, or tranquil?
Might he know
How conscious consciousness could grow,
Till love that was, and love too blest to be,
Meet—and the junction be Eternity?

20 //

THE last night that she lived, It was a common night, Except the dying; this to us Made nature different.

We noticed smallest things,— Things overlooked before, By this great light upon our minds Italicized, as 'twere.

That others could exist While she must finish quite,

A realousy for her arose So nearly infinite.

We waited while she passed; It was a narrow time, Too jostled were our souls to speak, At length the notice came.

She mentioned, and forgot; Then lightly as a reed Bent to the water, shivered scarce, Consented, and was dead.

And we, we placed the hair, And drew the head erect; And then an awful leisure was, Our faith to regulate.

21

Nor in this world to see his face Sounds long, until I read the place Where this is said to be But just the primer to a life Unopened, rare, upon the shelf, Clasped yet to him and me.

And yet, my primer suits me so I would not choose a book to know Than that, be sweeter wise; Might some one else so learned be, And leave me just my A B C, Himself could have the skies.

THE bustle in a house
The morning after death
Is solemnest of industries
Enacted upon earth,—

The sweeping up the heart, And putting love away We shall not want to use again Until eternity.

23

J REASON, earth is short, And anguish absolute, And many hurt; But what of that?

I reason, we could die: The best vitality Cannot excel decay; But what of that?

I reason that in heaven Somehow, it will be even, Some new equation given; But what of that?

24

Afraid? Of whom am I afraid? Not death; for who is he?

[173]

The porter of my father's lodge As much abasheth me.

Of life? 'Twere odd I fear a thing That comprehendeth me In one or more existences At Deity's decree.

Of resurrection? Is the east Afraid to trust the morn With her fastidious forehead? As soon impeach my crown!

25

THE sun kept setting, setting still; No hue of afternoon Upon the village I perceived,—From house to house 'twas noon.

The dusk kept dropping, dropping still; No dew upon the grass, But only on my forehead stopped, And wandered in my face.

My feet kept drowsing, drowsing still, My fingers were awake; Yet why so little sound myself Unto my seeming make?

How well I knew the light before! I could not see it now.

[174]

'Tis dying, I am doing; but I'm not afraid to know.

26

Two swimmers wrestled on the spar Until the morning sun, When one turned smiling to the land. O God, the other one!

The stray ships passing spied a face Upon the waters borne, With eyes in death still begging raised, And hands beseeching thrown.

27

BECAUSE I could not stop for Death, He kindly stopped for me; The carriage held but just ourselves And Immortality.

We slowly drove, he knew no haste, And I had put away My labor, and my leisure too, For his civility.

We passed the school where children played At wrestling in a ring; We passed the fields of gazing grain, We passed the setting sun.

We paused before a house that seemed A swelling of the ground;

[175]

The roof was scarcely visible, The cornice but a mound.

Since then 'tis centuries; but each Feels shorter than the day I first surmised the horses' heads Were toward eternity.

28 🤝

SHE went as quiet as the dew From a familiar flower. Not like the dew did she return At the accustomed hour!

She dropt as softly as a star From out my summer's eve; Less skillful than Leverrier It's sorer to believe!

29

At last to be identified!
At last, the lamps upon thy side,
The rest of life to see!
Past midnight, past the morning star!
Past sunrise! Ah! what leagues there are
Between our feet and day!

30

Except to heaven, she is nought; Except for angels, lone;

Except to some wide-wandering bee, A flower superfluous blown;

Except for winds, provincial; Except by butterflies, Unnoticed as a single dew That on the acre lies.

The smallest housewife in the grass, Yet take her from the lawn, And somebody has lost the face That made existence home!

21

DEATH is a dialogue between The spirit and the dust. "Dissolve," says Death. The Spirit, "Sir, I have another trust."

Death doubts it, argues from the ground. The Spirit turns away,
Just laying off, for evidence,
An overcoat of clay.

32

1

JT was too late for man, But early yet for God; Creation impotent to help, But prayer remained our side.

How excellent the heaven, When earth cannot be had;

[177]

How hospitable, then, the face Of our old neighbor, God!

> 33 /

WHEN I was small, a woman died. To-day her only boy
Went up from the Potomac,
His face all victory,

To look at her; how slowly The seasons must have turned Till bullets clipt an angle, And he passed quickly round!

If pride shall be in Paradise I never can decide; Of their imperial conduct, No person testified.

But proud in apparition,
That woman and her boy
Pass back and forth before my brain,
As ever in the sky.

34

THE daisy follows soft the sun,
And when his golden walk is done,
Sits shyly at his feet.
He, waking, finds the flower near.
"Wherefore, marauder, art thou here?"
"Because, sir, love is sweet!"

[178]

We are the flower, Thou the sun!
Forgive us, if as days decline,
We nearer steal to Thee,—
Enamoured of the parting west,
The peace, the flight, the amethyst,
Night's possibility!

35

No rack can torture me, My soul's at liberty. Behind this mortal bone There knits a bolder one

You cannot prick with saw, Nor rend with scimitar. Two bodies therefore be; Bind one, and one will flee.

The eagle of his nest No easier divest And gain the sky, Than mayest thou,

Except thyself may be Thine enemy; Captivity is consciousness, So's liberty.

36

I LOST a world the other day. Has anybody found?

You'll know it by the row of stars Around its forehead bound.

A rich man might not notice it; Yet to my frugal eye Of more esteem than ducats. Oh, find it, sir, for me!

37

JF I shouldn't be alive When the robins come, Give the one in red cravat A memorial crumb.

If I couldn't thank you, Being just asleep, You will know I'm trying With my granite lip!

38

SLEEP is supposed to be, By souls of sanity, The shutting of the eye.

Sleep is the station grand Down which on either hand The hosts of witness stand!

Morn is supposed to be, By people of degree, The breaking of the day.

[180]

Morning has not occurred! That shall aurora be East of eternity;

One with the banner gay, One in the red array,— That is the break of day.

39

I shall know why, when time is over, And I have ceased to wonder why; Christ will explain each separate anguish In the fair schoolroom of the sky.

He will tell me what Peter promised, And I, for wonder at his woe, I shall forget the drop of anguish That scalds me now, that scalds me now.

40

I never lost as much but thice, And that was in the sod; Twice have I stood a beggar Before the door of God!

Angels, twice descending, Reimbursed my store. Burglar, banker, father, I am poor once more!

[181]

Let down the bars, O Death!
The tired flocks come in
Whose bleating ceases to repeat,
Whose wandering is done.

Thine is the stillest night,
Thine the securest fold;
Too near thou art for seeking thee,
Too tender to be told.

42

Going to heaven!
I don't know when,
Pray do not ask me how,—
Indeed, I'm too astonished
To think of answering you!
Going to heaven!—
How dim it sounds!
And yet it will be done
As sure as flocks go home at night
Unto the shepherd's arm!

Perhaps you're going too!
Who knows?
If you should get there first,
Save just a little place for me
Close to the two I lost!
The smallest "robe" will fit me,
And just a bit of "crown";

[182]

For you know we do not mind our dress When we are going home.

I'm glad I don't believe it,
For it would stop my breath,
And I'd like to look a little more
At such a curious earth!
I am glad they did believe it
Whom I have never found
Since the mighty autumn afternoon
I left them in the ground.

43

AT least to pray is left, is left.

O Jesus! in the air
I know not which thy chamber is,—
I'm knocking everywhere.

Thou stirrest earthquake in the South, And maelstrom in the sea; Say, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Hast thou no arm for me?



STEP lightly on this narrow spot! The broadest land that grows Be not so ample as the breast These emerald seams enclose.

Step lofty; for this name is told As far as cannon dwell,

[183]

Ol flag subsist, or fame export Her deathless syllable.

45

Morns like these we parted; Noons like these she rose, Fluttering first, then firmer, To her fair repose.

Never did she lisp it, And 'twas not for me; She was mute from transport, I, from agony!

Till the evening, nearing, One the shutters drew— Quick! a sharper rustling! And this linnet flew!

46 //

A DEATH-BLOW is a life-blow to some Who, till they died, did not alive become; Who, had they lived, had died, but when They died, vitality begun.

47 //

J READ my sentence steadily, Reviewed it with my eyes, To see that I made no mistake In its extremest clause,—

[184]

The date, and manner of the shame; And then the pious form That "God have mercy" on the soul The jury voted him.

I made my soul familiar
With her extremity,
That at the last it should not be
A novel agony,

But she and Death, acquainted, Meet tranquilly as friends, Salute and pass without a hint—And there the matter ends.

48

J HAVE not told my garden yet, Lest that should conquer me; I have not quite the strength now To break it to the bee.

I will not name it in the street, For shops would stare, that I, So shy, so very ignorant, Should have the face to die.

The hillsides must not know it, Where I have rambled so, Nor tell the loving forests The day that I shall go,

Nor lisp it at the table, Nor heedless by the way

[185]

Hint that within the riddle One will walk to-day!

49

THEY dropped like flakes, they dropped like stars,
Like petals from a rose,
When suddenly across the June
A wind with fingers goes.

They perished in the seamless grass,—
No eye could find the place;
But God on his repealless list
Can summon every face.

50

THE only ghost I ever saw
Was dressed in mechlin,—so;
He wore no sandal on his foot,
And stepped like flakes of snow.
His gait was soundless, like the bird,
But rapid, like the roe;
His fashions quaint, mosaic,
Or, haply, mistletoe.

His conversation seldom,
His laughter like the breeze
That dies away in dimples
Among the pensive trees.
Our interview was transient,—
Of me, himself was shy;

[186]

And God forbid I look behind Since that appalling day!

51

Some, too fragile for winter winds, The thoughtful grave encloses,— Tenderly tucking them in from frost Before their feet are cold.

Never the treasures in her nest The cautious grave exposes, Building where schoolboy dare not look And sportsman is not bold.

This covert have all the children Early aged, and often cold,— Sparrows unnoticed by the Father; Lambs for whom time had not a fold.

52

As by the dead we love to sit, Become so wondrous dear, As for the lost we grapple, Though all the rest are here,—

In broken mathematics We estimate our prize, Vast, in its fading ratio, To our penurious eyes!

[187]

DEATH sets a thing significant The eye had hurried by, Except a perished creature Entreat us tenderly

To ponder little workmanships
In crayon or in wool,
With "This was last her fingers did,"
Industrious until

The thimble weighed too heavy, The stitches stopped themselves, And then 'twas put among the dust Upon the closet shelves.

A book I have, a friend gave, Whose pencil, here and there, Had notched the place that pleased him,— At rest his fingers are.

Now, when I read, I read not, For interrupting tears
Obliterate the etchings
Too costly for repairs.

54

I WENT to heaven,— 'Twas a small town, Lit with a ruby, Lathed with down. Stiller than the fields
At the full dew,
Beautiful as pictures
No man drew.
People like the moth,
Of mechlin frames,
Duties of gossamer,
And eider names.
Almost contented
I could be
'Mong such unique
Society.

55

THEIR height in heaven comforts not, Their glory nought to me; 'Twas best imperfect, as it was; I'm finite, I can't see.

The house of supposition,
The glimmering frontier
That skirts the acres of perhaps,
To me shows insecure.

The wealth I had contented me; If 'twas a meaner size, Then I had counted it until It pleased my narrow eyes

Better than larger values, However true their show;

[189]

This timid life of evidence Keeps pleading, "I don't know."

THERE is a shame of nobleness Confronting sudden pelf,— A finer shame of ecstasy Convicted of itself.

A best disgrace a brave man feels, Acknowledged of the brave,— One more "Ye Blessed" to be told; But this involves the grave.

57

TRIUMPH may be of several kinds. There's triumph in the room When that old imperator, Death, By faith is overcome.

There's triumph of the finer mind When truth, affronted long, Advances calm to her supreme, Her God her only throng.

A triumph when temptation's bribe Is slowly handed back,
One eye upon the heaven renounced And one upon the rack.

Severer triumph, by himself Experienced, who can pass

[190]

Acquitted from that naked bar, Jehovah's countenance!

58

Pompless no life can pass away;
The lowliest career
To the same pageant wends its way
As that exalted here.

How cordial is the mystery!

The hospitable pall

A "this way" beckons spaciously,—

A miracle for all!

59

J NOTICED people disappeared, When but a little child,— Supposed they visited remote, Or settled regions wild.

Now know I they both visited And settled regions wild, But did because they died,—a fact Withheld the little child!

60

J HAD no cause to be awake, My best was gone to sleep, And morn a new politeness took And failed to wake them up,

[191]

By: called the others clear, And passed their curtains by. Sweet morning, when I over-sleep, Knock, recollect, for me!

I looked at sunrise once, And then I looked at them, And wishfulness in me arose For circumstance the same.

'Twas such an ample peace, It could not hold a sigh,— 'Twas Sabbath with the bells divorced, 'Twas sunset all the day.

So choosing but a gown And taking but a prayer, The only raiment I should need, I struggled, and was there.

41

IF anybody's friend be dead, It's sharpest of the theme The thinking how they walked alive, At such and such a time.

Their costume, of a Sunday, Some manner of the hair,— A prank nobody knew but them, Lost, in the sepulchre. How warm they were on such a day: You almost feel the date, So short way off it seems; and now, They're centuries from that.

How pleased they were at what you said; You try to touch the smile, And dip your fingers in the frost: When was it, can you tell,

You asked the company to tea, Acquaintance, just a few, And chatted close with this grand thing That don't remember you?

Past bows and invitations,
Past interview, and vow,
Past what ourselves can estimate,—
That makes the quick of woe!

62

Our journey had advanced; Our feet were almost come To that odd fork in Being's road, Eternity by term.

Our pace took sudden awe, Our feet reluctant led. Before were cities, but between, The forest of the dead.

Retreat was out of hope,—Behind, a sealed route,

[193]

Etennity's white flag before, And God at every gate.

63 /

AMPLE make this bed.

Make this bed with awe;
In it wait till judgment break
Excellent and fair.

Be its mattress straight, Be its pillow round; Let no sunrise' yellow noise Interrupt this ground.

64

On such a night, or such a night, Would anybody care If such a little figure Slipped quiet from its chair,

So quiet, oh, how quiet! That nobody might know But that the little figure Rocked softer, to and fro?

On such a dawn, or such a dawn, Would anybody sigh That such a little figure Too sound asleep did lie

For chanticleer to wake it,—Or stirring house below,

Or giddy bird in orchard, Or early task to do?

There was a little figure plump For every little knoll, Busy needles, and spools of thread, And trudging feet from school.

Playmates, and holidays, and nuts, And visions vast and small. Strange that the feet so precious charged Should reach so small a goal!

45

ESSENTIAL oils are wrung:
The attar from the rose
Is not expressed by suns alone,
It is the gift of screws.

The general rose decays; But this, in lady's drawer, Makes summer when the lady lies In ceaseless rosemary.

66

I LIVED on dread; to those who know The stimulus there is In danger, other impetus Is numb and vital-less.

As 'twere a spur upon the soul, A fear will urge it where

[195]

To to without the spectre's aid Were challenging despair.

67 /

JF I should die. And you should live, And time should gurgle on, And morn should beam, And noon should burn. As it has usual done; If birds should build as early, And bees as bustling go,— One might depart at option From enterprise below! 'Tis sweet to know that stocks will stand When we with daisies lie, That commerce will continue, And trades as briskly fly. It makes the parting tranquil And keeps the soul serene, That gentlemen so sprightly Conduct the pleasing scene!

68

HER final summer was it, And yet we guessed it not; If tenderer industriousness Pervaded her, we thought

A further force of life Developed from within,—

[196]

When Death lit all the shortness up, And made the hurry plain.

We wondered at our blindness,— When nothing was to see But her Carrara guide-post,— At our stupidity,

When, duller than our dulness, The busy darling lay, So busy was she, finishing, So leisurely were we!

69

One need not be a chamber to be haunted, One need not be a house;
The brain has corridors surpassing Material place.

Far safer, of a midnight meeting External ghost,
Than an interior confronting
That whiter host.

Far safer through an Abbey gallop, The stones achase, Than, moonless, one's own self encounter In lonesome place.

Ourself, behind ourself concealed, Should startle most;

[197]

Assessin, hid in our apartment, Be horror's least.

The prudent carries a revolver, He bolts the door, O'erlooking a superior spectre More near.

70

SHE died,—this was the way she died; And when her breath was done, Took up her simple wardrobe And started for the sun.

Her little figure at the gate The angels must have spied, Since I could never find her Upon the mortal side.

71

Wair till the majesty of Death Invests so mean a brow! Almost a powdered footman Might dare to touch it now!

Wait till in everlasting robes
This democrat is dressed,
Then prate about "preferment"
And "station" and the rest!

[198]

Around this quiet courtier Obsequious angels wait! Full royal is his retinue, Full purple is his state!

A lord might dare to lift the hat To such a modest clay, Since that my Lord, "the Lord of lords" Receives unblushingly!

72

Went up a year this evening! I recollect it well! Amid no bells nor bravos The bystanders will tell! Cheerful, as to the village, Tranquil, as to repose, Chastened, as to the chapel, This humble tourist rose. Did not talk of returning. Alluded to no time When, were the gales propitious, We might look for him; Was grateful for the roses In life's diverse bouquet, Talked softly of new species To pick another day. Beguiling thus the wonder, The wondrous nearer drew: Hands bustled at the moorings-The crowd respectful grew.

[199]

Astended from our vision To countenances new! A difference, a daisy, Is all the rest I knew!

73 %

Taken from men this morning, Carried by men to-day, Met by the gods with banners Who marshalled her away.

One little maid from playmates, One little mind from school,— There must be guests in Eden; All the rooms are full.

Far as the east from even, Dim as the border star,— Couftiers quaint, in kingdoms, Our departed are.

74

What inn is this
Where for the night
Peculiar traveller comes?
Who is the landlord?
Where the maids?
Behold, what curious rooms!
No ruddy fires on the hearth,
No brimming tankards flow.

[200]

Necromancer, landlord, Who are these below?

75

It was not death, for I stood up, And all the dead lie down; It was not night, for all the bells Put out their tongues, for noon.

It was not frost, for on my flesh I felt siroccos crawl,—
Nor fire, for just my marble feet Could keep a chancel cool.

And yet it tasted like them all; The figures I have seen Set orderly, for burial, Reminded me of mine,

As if my life were shaven And fitted to a frame, And could not breathe without a key; And 'twas like midnight, some,

When everything that ticked has stopped, And space stares, all around, Or grisly frosts, first autumn morns, Repeal the beating ground.

But most like chaos,—stopless, cool,—Without a chance or spar,

[201]

Or even a report of land To justify despair.

76

J should not dare to leave my friend, Because—because if he should die While I was gone, and I—too late— Should reach the heart that wanted me;

If I should disappoint the eyes
That hunted, hunted so, to see,
And could not bear to shut until
They "noticed" me—they noticed me;

If I should stab the patient faith
So sure I'd come—so sure I'd come,
It listening, listening, went to sleep
Telling my tardy name,—

My heart would wish it broke before, Since breaking then, since breaking then, Were useless as next morning's sun, Where midnight frosts had lain!

77

GREAT streets of silence led away To neighborhoods of pause; Here was no notice, no dissent, No universe, no laws.

[202]

By clocks 'twas morning, and for night The bells at distance called; But epoch had no basis here, For period exhaled.

> 78 //

A THROE upon the features, A hurry in the breath, An ecstasy of parting Denominated "Death,"—

An anguish at the mention, Which, when to patience grown, I've known permission given To rejoin its own.

79

Of tribulation these are they Denoted by the white; The spangled gowns, a lesser rank Of victors designate.

All these did conquer; but the ones Who overcame most times Wear nothing commoner than snow, No ornament but palms.

Surrender is a sort unknown On this superior soil; Defeat, an outgrown anguish, Remembered as the mile

[203]

Orr panting ankle barely gained When night devoured the road; But we stood whispering in the house, And all we said was "Saved!"

80

I THINK just how my shape will rise When I shall be forgiven, Till hair and eyes and timid head Are out of sight, in heaven.

I think just how my lips will weigh With shapeless, quivering prayer That you, so late, consider me, The sparrow of your care.

I mind me that of anguish sent, Some drifts were moved away Before my simple bosom broke,— And why not this, if they?

And so, until delirious borne
I con that thing,—"forgiven,"—
Till with long fright and longer trust
I drop my heart, unshriven!

81

AFTER a hundred years Nobody knows the place,—Agony, that enacted there, Motionless as peace.

[204]

Weeds triumphant ranged, Strangers strolled and spelled At the lone orthography Of the elder dead.

Winds of summer fields Recollect the way,— Instinct picking up the key Dropped by memory.

82

Lay this laurel on the one Too intrinsic for renown.

Laurel! veil your deathless tree,Him you chasten, that is he!

83

This world is not conclusion;
A sequel stands beyond,
Invisible, as music,
But positive, as sound.
It beckons and it baffles;
Philosophies don't know,
And through a riddle, at the last,
Sagacity must go.
To guess it puzzles scholars;
To gain it, men have shown
Contempt of generations,
And crucifixion known.

[205]

24

We learn in the retreating
How vast an one
Was recently among us.
A perished sun

Endears in the departure
How doubly more
Than all the golden presence
It was before!

85 //

They say that "time assuages,"-Time never did assuage; An actual suffering strengthens, As sinews do, with age.

Time is a test of trouble,
But not a remedy.

If such it prove, it prove too
There was no malady.

86

We cover thee, sweet face.
Not that we tire of thee,
But that thyself fatigue of us;
Remember, as thou flee,
We follow thee until
Thou notice us no more,
And then, reluctant, turn away

[206]

To con thee o'er and o'er,
And blame the scanty love
We were content to show,
Augmented, sweet, a hundred fold
If thou would'st take it now.

87

THAT is solemn we have ended,— Be it but a play, Or a glee among the garrets, Or a holiday,

Or a leaving home; or later,
Parting with a world
We have understood, for better
Still it be unfurled.



THE stimulus, beyond the grave
His countenance to see,
Supports me like imperial drams
Afforded royalty.

89 U

GIVEN in marriage unto thee,
Oh, thou celestial host!
Bride of the Father and the Son,
Bride of the Holy Ghost!

[207]

Other betrothal shall dissolve,
(Wedlock of will decay;
Only the keeper of this seal
Conquers mortality.

90

Энат such have died enables usThe tranquiller to die;That such have lived, certificateFor immortality.

91

They won't frown always,—some sweet day
When I forget to tease,
They'll recollect how cold I looked,
And how I just said "please."

Then they will hasten to the door
To call the little child,
Who cannot thank them, for the ice
That on her lisping piled.

92//

'Tis an honorable thought,
And makes one lift one's hat,
As one encountered gentlefolk
Upon a daily street,

That we've immortal place, Though pyramids decay,

[208]

And kingdoms, like the orchard, Flit russetly away.

93/

The distance that the dead have gone
Does not at first appear;
Their coming back seems possible
For many an ardent year.

And then, that we have followed them
We more than half suspect,
So intimate have we become
With their dear retrospect.

94

How dare the robins sing, When men and women hear Who since they went to their account Have settled with the year!— Paid all that life had earned In one consummate bill, And now, what life or death can do Is immaterial. Insulting is the sun To him whose mortal light, Beguiled of immortality, Bequeaths him to the night. In deference to him Extinct be every hum. Whose garden wrestles with the dew, At daybreak overcome!

[209]

DEATH is like the insect Menacing the tree, Competent to kill it, But decoyed may be.

Bait it with the balsam, Seek it with the knife, Baffle, if it cost you Everything in life.

Then, if it have burrowed Out of reach of skill, Ring the tree and leave it,—
'Tis the vermin's will.

96

'Tis sunrise, little maid, hast thou No station in the day? 'Twas not thy wont to hinder so,— Retrieve thine industry.

'Tis noon, my little maid, alas! And art thou sleeping yet? The lily waiting to be wed, The bee, dost thou forget?

My little maid, 'tis night; alas,
That night should be to thee
Instead of morning! Hadst thou broached
Thy little plan to me,

[210]

Dissuade thee if I could not, sweet, I might have aided thee.

97

EACH that we lose takes part of us; A crescent still abides, Which like the moon, some turbid night, Is summoned by the tides.

98

Not any higher stands the grave For heroes than for men; Not any nearer for the child Than numb three-score and ten.

This latest leisure equal lulls
The beggar and his queen;
Propitiate this democrat
A summer's afternoon.

99

As far from pity as complaint, As cool to speech as stone, As numb to revelation As if my trade were bone.

As far from time as history,
As near yourself to-day
As children to the rainbow's scarf,
Or sunset's yellow play

[211]

To evelids in the sepulchre.

How still the dancer lies,

While color's revelations break,

And blaze the butterflies!

100

'Tis whiter than an Indian pipe,
'Tis dimmer than a lace;
No stature has it, like a fog,
When you approach the place.

Not any voice denotes it here, Or intimates it there; A spirit, how doth it accost? What customs hath the air?

This limitless hyperbole
Each one of us shall be;
'Tis drama, if (hypothesis)
It be not tragedy!

101

SHE laid her docile crescent down, And this confiding stone Still states, to dates that have forgot, The news that she is gone.

So constant to its stolid trust,
The shaft that never knew,
It shames the constancy that fled
Before its emblem flew.

[212]

BLESS God, he went as soldiers,
His musket on his breast;
Grant, God, he charge the bravest
Of all the martial blest.

Please God, might I behold him In epauletted white, I should not fear the foe then, I should not fear the fight.

103

JMMORTAL is an ample word When what we need is by, But when it leaves us for a time, 'Tis a necessity.

Of heaven above the firmest proof We fundamental know, Except for its marauding hand, It had been heaven below.

104

Where every bird is bold to go, And bees abashless play, The foreigner before he knocks Must thrust the tears away.

105

THE grave my little cottage is, Where, keeping house for thee,

I make my parlor orderly, And lay the marble tea,

For two divided, briefly, A cycle, it may be, Till everlasting life unite In strong society.

106

This was in the white of the year,
That was in the green,
Drifts were as difficult then to think
As daisies now to be seen.

Looking back is best that is left, Or if it be before, Retrospection is prospect's half, Sometimes almost more.

107 -/

Sweet hours have perished here;This is a mighty room;Within its precincts hopes have played,Now shadows in the tomb.

108

ME! Come! My dazzled face In such a shining place!

Me! Hear! My foreign ear The sounds of welcome near!

[214]

The saints shall meet Our bashful feet.

My holiday shall be That they remember me;

My paradise, the fame That they pronounce my name.

109

FROM us she wandered now a year,
Her tarrying unknown;
If wilderness prevent her feet,
Or that ethereal zone

No eye hath seen and lived, We ignorant must be. We only know what time of year We took the mystery.

110

J wish I knew that woman's name, So, when she comes this way, To hold my life, and hold my ears, For fear I hear her say

She's "sorry I am dead," again,
Just when the grave and I
Have sobbed ourselves almost to sleep,
Our only lullaby.

215]

BEREAVED of all, I went abroad, No less bereaved to be Upon a new peninsula,— The grave preceded me,

Obtained my lodgings ere myself, And when I sought my bed, The grave it was, reposed upon The pillow for my head.

I waked, to find it first awake, I rose,—it followed me; I tried to drop it in the crowd, To lose it in the sea,

In cups of artificial drowse

To sleep its shape away,—

The grave was finished, but the spade

Remained in memory.

112

7 FELT a funeral in my brain, And mourners, to and fro, Kept treading, treading, till it seemed That sense was breaking through.

And when they all were seated,
A service like a drum
Kept beating, beating, till I thought
My mind was going numb.

And then I heard them lift a box,
And creak across my soul
With those same boots of lead, again.
Then space began to toll

As all the heavens were a bell,
And Being but an ear,
And I and silence some strange race,
Wrecked, solitary, here.

113

J MEANT to find her when I came; Death had the same design; But the success was his, it seems, And the discomfit mine.

I meant to tell her how I longed For just this single time; But Death had told her so the first, And she had hearkened him.

To wander now is my abode;
To rest,—to rest would be
A privilege of hurricane
To memory and me.

114

I sing to use the waiting,
My bonnet but to tie,
And shut the door unto my house;
No more to do have I,

Till, his best step approaching,
 We journey to the day,
 And tell each other how we sang
 To keep the dark away.

115

A SICKNESS of this world it most occasions
When best men die;
A wishfulness their far condition
To occupy.

A chief indifference, as foreign A world must be Themselves forsake contented, For Deity.

116

Superfluous were the sun When excellence is dead; He were superfluous every day, For every day is said

That syllable whose faith
Just saves it from despair,
And whose "I'll meet you" hesitates—
If love inquire, "Where?"

Upon his dateless fame
Our periods may lie,
As stars that drop anonymous
From an abundant sky.

[218]

So proud she was to die
It made us all ashamed
That what we cherished, so unknown
'To her desire seemed.

So satisfied to go
Where none of us should be,
Immediately, that anguish stooped
Almost to jealousy.

118

Tie the strings to my life, my Lord,
Then I am ready to go!
Just a look at the horses—
Rapid! That will do!

Put me on the firmest side, So I shall never fall; For we must ride to the Judgment, And it's partly down hill.

But never I mind the bri lges, And never I mind the sea; Held fast in everlasting race By my own choice and thee.

Good-by to the life I used to live, And the world I used to know; And kiss the hills for me, just once; Now I am ready to go!

[219]

THE dying need but little, dear,— A glass of water's all,A flower's unobtrusive face To punctuate the wall,

A fan, perhaps, a friend's regret, And certainly that one No color in the rainbow Perceives when you are gone.

120

THERE'S something quieter than sleep Within this inner room!
It wears a sprig upon its breast,
And will not tell its name.

Some touch it and some kiss it, Some chafe its idle hand; It has a simple gravity I do not understand!

While simple-hearted neighbors Chat of the "early dead," We, prone to periphrasis, Remark that birds have fled!

. /

THREE weeks passed since I had seen her, Some disease had vexed;

[220]

Twas with text and village singing I beheld her next,

And a company—our pleasure To discourse alone; Gracious now to me as any, Gracious unto none.

Borne, without dissent of either, To the parish night; Of the separated people Which are out of sight?

122 ---

J BREATHED enough to learn the trick, And now, removed from air, I simulate the breath so well, That one, to be quite sure

The lungs are stirless, must descend Among the cunning cells, And touch the pantomime himself. How cool the bellow: feels!

123

J WONDER if the sepulchre
Is not a lonesome way,
When men and boys, and larks and June
Go down the fields to hay!

[221]

Jr tolling bell I ask the cause,
"A soul has gone to God,"
I'm answered in a lonesome tone;
Is heaven then so sad?

That bells should joyful ring to tell
A soul had gone to heaven,
Would seem to me the proper way
A good news should be given.

125

JF I may have it when it's dead I will contented be; If just as soon as breath is out It shall belong to me,

Until they lock it in the grave,
'Tis bliss I cannot weigh,
For though they lock thee in the grave,
Myself can hold the key.

Think of it, lover! I and thee Permitted face to face to be; After a life, a death we'll say,— For death was that, and this is thee.

126

Before the ice is in the pools, Before the skaters go,

[222]

Or any cheek at nightfall Is tarnished by the snow,

Before the fields have finished, Before the Christmas tree, Wonder upon wonder Will arrive to me!

What we touch the hems of On a summer's day; What is only walking Just a bridge away;

That which sings so, speaks so,
When there's no one here,—
Will the frock I wept in
Answer me to wear?

127

J HEARD a fly buzz when I died; The stillness round my form Was like the stillness in the air Between the heaves of storm.

The eyes beside had wrung them dry, And breaths were gathering sure For that last onset, when the king Be witnessed in his power.

I willed my keepsakes, signed away What portion of me I

[223]

Could make assignable,—and then There interposed a fly,

With blue, uncertain, stumbling buzz,
Between the light and me;
And then the windows failed, and then
I could not see to see.

128

Add night is coming down!

Will no one guide a little boat
Unto the nearest town?

So sailors say, on yesterday, Just as the dusk was brown, One little boat gave up its strife And gurgled down and down.

But angels say, on yesterday,
Just as the dawn was red,
One little boat o'erspent with gales
Retrimmed its masts, redecked its sails
Exultant, onward sped!

129

THERE'S been a death in the opposite house
As lately as to-day.
I know it by the numb look
Such houses have alway.

[224]

The neighbors rustle in and out,
The doctor drives away.
A window opens like a pod,
Abrupt, mechanically;

Somebody flings a mattress out,— The children hurry by; They wonder if It died on that,— I used to when a boy.

The minister goes stiffly in
As if the house were his,
And he owned all the mourners now,
And little boys besides;

And then the milliner, and the man
Of the appalling trade,
To take the measure of the house.
There'll be that dark parade

Of tassels and of coaches soon; It's easy as a sign,— The intuition of the news In just a country town.

130

We never know we go,—when we are going We jest and shut the door;
Fate following behind us bolts it,
And we accost no more.

[225]

(*

It struck me every day
The lightning was as new
As if the cloud that instant slit
And let the fire through.

It burned me in the night,
It blistered in my dream;
It sickened fresh upon my sight
With every morning's beam.

I thought that storm was brief,— The maddest, quickest by; But Nature lost the date of this, And left it in the sky.

132

WATER is taught by thirst; Land, by the oceans passed; Transport, by throe; Peace, by its battles told; Love, by memorial mould; Birds, by the snow.

133

We thirst at first,—'tis Nature's act; And later, when we die, A little water supplicate Of fingers going by.

[226]

It intimates the finer want,
Whose adequate supply
Is that great water in the west
Termed immortality.

134

A CLOCK stopped—not the mantel's; Geneva's farthest skill Can't put the puppet bowing That just now dangled still.

An awe came on the trinket!

The figures hunched with pain,
Then quivered out of decimals
Into degreeless noon.

It will not stir for doctors,
This pendulum of snow;
The shopman importunes it,
While cool, concernless No

Nods from the gilded pointers, Nods from the seconds slim, Decades of arrogance between The dial life and him.

135

ALL overgrown by cunning moss, All interspersed with weed, The little cage of "Currer Bell," In quiet Haworth laid. This bird, observing others,

V/hen frosts too sharp became,
Retire to other latitudes,

Quietly did the same.

But differed in returning;
Since Yorkshire hills are green,
Yet not in all the nests I meet
Can nightingale be seen.

Gathered from any wanderings,
Gethsemane can tell
Through what transporting anguish
She reached the asphodel!

Soft fall the sounds of Eden
Upon her puzzled ear;
Oh, what an afternoon for heaven,
When Brontë entered there!

136

A TOAD can die of light!

Death is the common right

Of toads and men,—

Of earl and midge

The privilege.
Why swagger then?
The gnat's supremacy
Is large as thine.

[228]

FAR from love the Heavenly Father Leads the chosen child; Oftener through realm of briar Than the meadow mild,

Oftener by the claw of dragon
Than the hand of friend,
Guides the little one predestined
To the native land.

138

A LONG, long sleep, a famous sleep
That makes no show for dawn
By stretch of limb or stir of lid,—
An independent one.

Was ever idleness like this?
Within a hut of stone
To bask the centuries away
Nor once look up for noon?

139

'Twas just this time last year I died.
I know I heard the corn,
When I was carried by the farms,—
It had the tassels on.

I thought how yellow it would look When Richard went to mill;

[229]

And then I wanted to get out, But something held my will.

I thought just how red apples wedged
The stubble's joints between;
And carts went stooping round the fields
To take the pumpkins in.

I wondered which would miss me least, And when Thanksgiving came, If father'd multiply the plates To make an even sum.

And if my stocking hung too high, Would it blur the Christmas glee, That not a Santa Claus could reach The altitude of me?

But this sort grieved myself, and so
I thought how it would be
When just this time, some perfect year,
Themselves should come to me.

140

On this wondrous sea,
Sailing silently,
Knowest thou the shore
Ho! pilot, ho!
Where no breakers roar,
Where the storm is o'er?

[230]

In the silent west
Many sails at rest,
Their anchors fast;
Thither I pilot thee,—
Land, ho! Eternity!
Ashore at last!

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